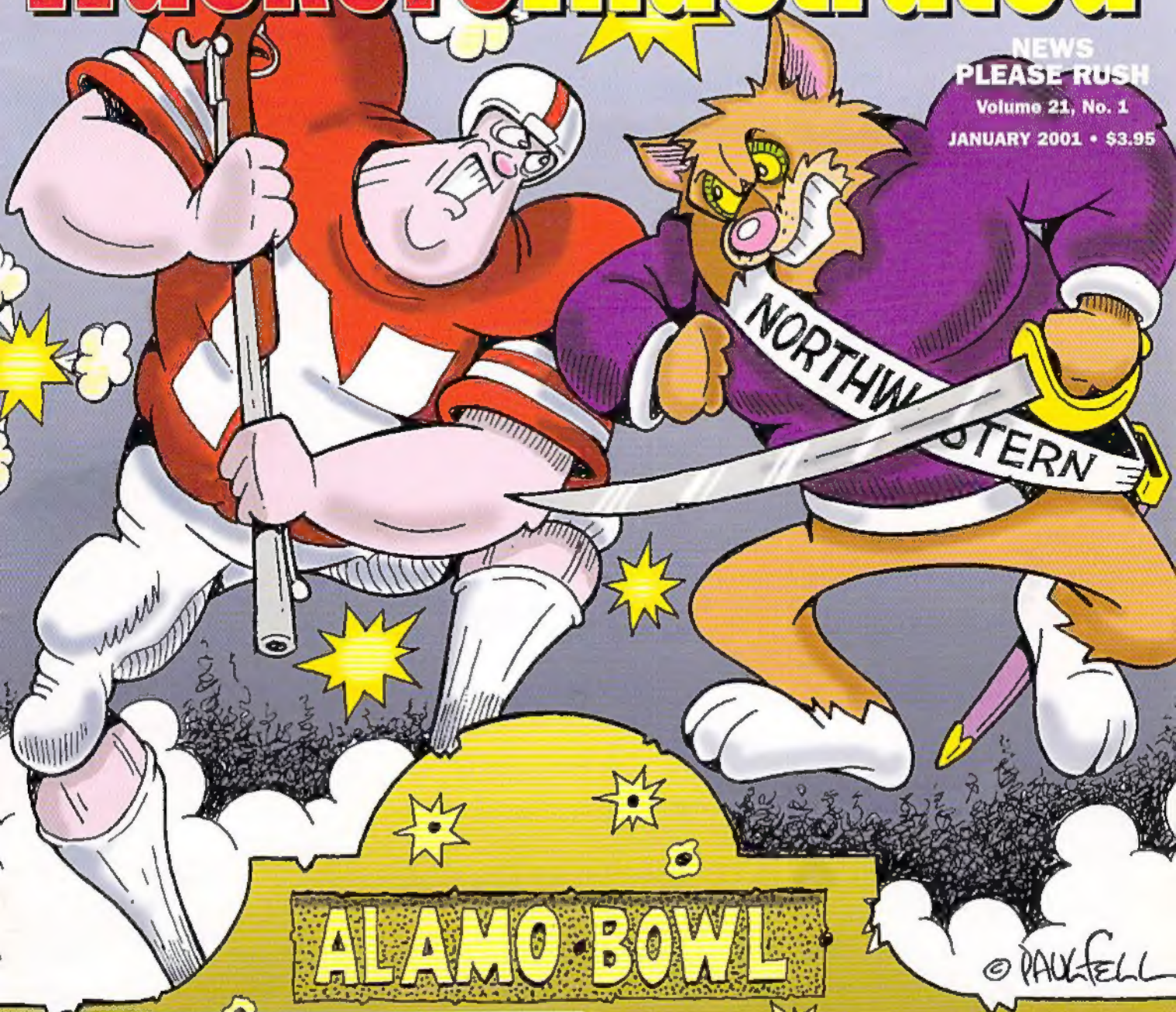


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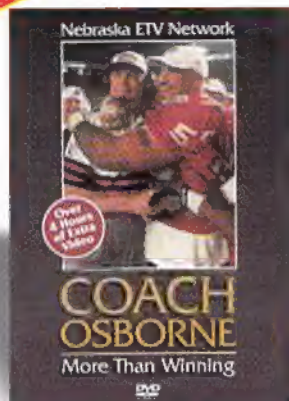


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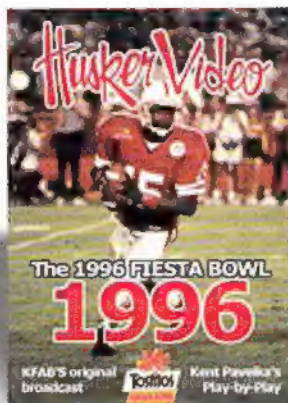
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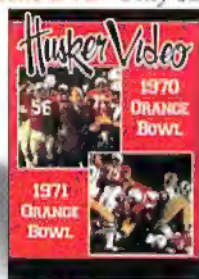
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A Dream Season

Husker volleyball team just the second unbeaten national champion



Brian Hill

ON A RAW December day, with wind gusts of more 50 miles per hour, temperatures in the single digits and wind chills down to 50 below zero, many Nebraskans needed something to warm their hearts.

They got it.

The heartwarming story that was the 2000 Nebraska volleyball team ended in storybook fashion, with a victory over Wisconsin for the national championship Dec. 16 in Richmond, Va.

In winning the program's second national title, these Huskers (34-0) became just the second team to go unbeaten, joining the 1998 Long Beach State team.

The improbable run began with a young Nebraska team rated sixth and 11th in the preseason polls. This team, already missing five seniors from a year ago, lost even more experience when the decision was made to redshirt two-time All-American Nancy Meendering, who had been training with the U.S. National Team.

That move led some to question the sanity of first-year Coach John Cook, the hand-picked successor of longtime coach Terry Pettit.

"We took a huge risk redshirting Nancy, but this team has played to its maximum ability," Cook said after the championship match.

The Final Four starting lineup included three sophomores, one junior and two seniors. Four of the six are from Nebraska.

The Huskers' performance earned Cook coach of the year honors, while sophomore setter Greichaly Cepero was named player of the year, and Cepero and sophomore Laura Pilakowski were chosen as first-team All-Americans.

The magical season also included a school record total attendance of 80,252, which included an NCAA regular-season

record of 12,504 for the Colorado match Nov. 4 at the Bob Devaney Sports Center (home matches are normally played at the 4,200-seat NU Coliseum).

Seven weeks later, the Huskers were to return to the Sports Center for a national championship celebration.

With the Husker volleyball team advancing through the NCAA Tournament, we made the decision to hold this pre-bowl edition of *Huskers Illustrated* until after the Final Four. We rushed in coverage of the championship match (Pages 22-23) and plan to have follow-up coverage in the next edition.

As you see on the cover, this issue previews Nebraska's Dec. 30 Alamo Bowl game against Northwestern.

The 8-3 Wildcats feature a high-powered offense, which outscored Michigan 54-51 and Illinois 61-23. But Northwestern also lost at Iowa (27-17) Nov. 11, which cost it a chance at an outright Big Ten title.

Contributing editor Mike Babcock takes a closer look at the matchup in San Antonio (Page 14).

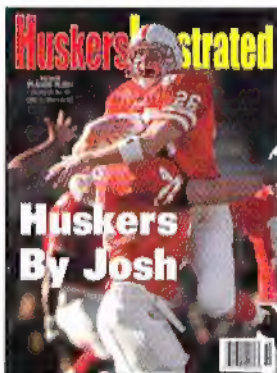
This issue also includes an interview with former quarterback Jerry Tagge, who produced one of the most memorable moments in Husker history, by stretching the ball over the goal line to beat LSU and give Nebraska its first national championship on Jan. 1, 1971.

Winning three national championships (1994, 1995, 1997) in four years can make it look a lot easier than it really is.

Pettit, who coached Nebraska to its first volleyball title in 1995, tried to explain the feeling in a radio interview after the Huskers' latest championship.

"When it happens," he said, "it's the most wonderful feeling... Things like this don't happen very often in your life."

Congratulations to the Huskers, and happy holidays to all! ■



ON THE COVER

It'll be the Huskers vs. the Wildcats in the Alamo Bowl Dec. 30 in San Antonio. Illustration by Paul Fell

Got Something To Say?

Please send your comments and questions to: Letters, 3210 NW 3rd St., Lincoln, Neb. 68521. You can also fax them to us at (402) 474-5132. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, Hleditor@aol.com.

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January 2001 • Volume 21, No. 1



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All-America center Dominic Raiola and his Husker teammates are ready to face high-scoring Northwestern. *By Mike Babcock*

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There's Nowhere to Hide

DeJuan Groce occasionally dozed off during film sessions when he was a freshman. He can admit that now because he has earned a Blackshirt, for one thing, and he no longer nods off, for another.

"I couldn't believe we were watching so much film," the sophomore cornerback said of his first season at Nebraska. "I didn't think college football was going to be all about film."

"But there's a lot of film that we watch. We watch practice on ourselves. And then we watch film on the other team. We watch film all week long. That's one thing I had to get used to."

He also had to learn how to watch film, how to study receivers, an on-going process. "That's one thing I've been trying to work on," he said. "It's kind of helped me this year."

Statistics support that contention. Groce broke the school single-season record by breaking up 17 passes this season. All-American Ralph Brown set the previous record of 15 last season.

Groce also intercepted a pass and forced a fumble, playing as the "dime" back and alternating with Erwin Swiney on the right side — the position at which he started the final two games.

Swiney broke up 10 passes this season and Craver broke up 13 as the Cornhuskers shattered the school single-season record with 90. The previous mark was 58 (1996, 1998, 1999).

Opponents tried to attack Nebraska through the air, throwing 393 passes. By comparison, opponents threw 388 passes last season, in 12 games instead of this season's 11.

Because of all the passes, "it was



DeJuan Groce has learned to study receivers, in order to identify their tendencies.

more fun for us," Groce said.

Playing in the secondary isn't always fun, however. With the Cornhuskers' dependence on man-to-man coverage, cornerbacks can't hide from their mistakes. Everyone in the stadium knows.

So defensive backs have to be resilient, and "you've got to have people around you that lift you up, don't put you down," said Groce. "That kind of gives you motivation to keep going, to stay out

there. You've got to be more mentally tough when you move up to college."

Obviously, playing defensive back was considerably less complicated at St. Edward High School in Garfield Heights, Ohio, where he was a Parade magazine All-American. Groce could rely on his speed and athleticism. At Nebraska, he has to complement his physical ability with technique.

In fact, "it's a lot of technique," he said.

Learning the techniques has depended not only on repetition in practice but also on film study, which Brown encouraged him to do from the beginning. "Ralph used to get on me," Groce said.

Brown told him to watch videotape of other cornerbacks, including the New England Patriots' Ty Law, "just watch his techniques," said Groce. "Ralph watched cornerbacks."

Brown studied receivers, too, in order to identify their tendencies. But he watched cornerbacks to learn "different techniques and tried to use them on the field, see what worked for him."

At first, Groce wasn't sure what to look for when he watched tape of Law.

"I'm watching and it's like, 'OK, he's covering real good,'" Groce said. But so what?

Now, however, Groce understands why Brown wanted him to study Law. "Seeing how he moves and reacts, different things, helps a lot," he said. "Ooh, Ty Law is amazing."

Groce also is learning to identify the tendencies of receivers against whom he is matched, "see what stuff you'll probably fall for, watch it and see how he does his techniques." ■

SENIOR CLASS 'KIND OF LIKE A BOWL OF JELLYBEANS'

The Nebraska football team's senior class of 27 has a combined record of 43-7 over four seasons, an .860 winning percentage, with two Big 12 championships and a national title in 1997.

"All 27 have really contributed greatly to where this program is at and certainly to what we've been able to accomplish this season," Coach Frank Solich said prior to the Colorado game.

Offensive guard and co-captain Russ Hochstein was among the 19 scholarship recruits who arrived in 1996 to form the basis of this class. "We've lost a lot of guys over the years," he said.

Some suffered career-ending injuries. Some transferred. And some got discouraged and quit.

Mike Brown, Ralph Brown, Steve Warren and Eric Johnson, all of whom were members of Hochstein's scholarship recruiting class, completed their eligibility last season.

"We've always had a tight-knit bunch, the rest of us," Hochstein said. "We're not a very big class, by any means. But in that class, we have a lot of different personalities, a lot of different characters, and it's been a fun class to be a part of. Hopefully, we leave a little bit of a mark here."

Considering the diversity of the Cornhuskers' 27 seniors, "I think we're kind of like a bowl of jellybeans," said

Hochstein. "You've got all the different-color jellybeans. You've got all the different personalities and all the different attitudes and things like that."

Jellybeans or not, "they're all appreciated," Solich said. Nebraska's 1996 scholarship recruiting class (*seniors this season):

*Dan Alexander	FB/LB	Wentzville, Mo.
Luis Almanzar	DT	Jersey City, N.J.
Sasho Bevarovski	OL	Crown Point, Ind.
Mike Brown	DB	Scottsdale, Ariz.
Ralph Brown, II	DB	Walnut, Calif.
J.R. Edwards	REC	Lincoln, Neb.
DeAngelo Evans	RB	Wichita, Kan.
Justin Ferrell	OL	McAllen, Texas
*Clint Finley	QB	Cuero, Texas
*John Gibson	R/DB	Papillion, Neb.
George Guidry	DE	Lake Charles, La.
*Russ Hochstein	OL	Hartington, Neb.
Eric Johnson	DB	Phoenix, Ariz.
*Loran Kaiser	LB/DE	Farwell, Neb.
*Willie Miller	FB	Omaha, Neb.
*Carlos Polk	LB	Rockford, Ill.
Khari Reynolds	R/DB	Mays Landing, N.J.
Steve Warren	DL	Springfield, Mo.
David Webber	OL/DL	St. Louis, Mo.

VERY OFFENSIVE

Eric Crouch ran for three touchdowns against Colorado to finish the season with 20 rushing touchdowns. The junior quarterback from Omaha now has 40 career rushing touchdowns, tying him with Calvin Jones (1991-93) for third place on the Cornhuskers' all-time list.

Mike Rozier (1981-83) is first with 49, followed by Ahman Green (1995-97) with 42.

Crouch's 20 rushing touchdowns also rank third, behind Rozier's 29 in 1983 and Green's 22 in 1997.

Crouch's 264 yards of total offense (125 rushing and 139 passing) against Colorado moved him into second place on Nebraska's career list. The top five, all quarterbacks:

1. Tommie Frazier	1992-95	5,476
2. Eric Crouch	1998-2000	5,290
3. Jerry Tagge	1969-71	5,283
4. Dave Humm	1972-74	5,027
5. Steve Taylor	1985-88	4,940

Crouch just missed joining former Cornhusker quarterback Scott Frost among the elite few in NCAA Division I-A history to rush and pass for 1,000 or more yards in the same season.

Crouch finished with 1,101 passing yards and 971 rushing yards.

TACKLE TOTAL

Carlos Polk was officially credited with seven tackles in the Colorado game, increasing his team-leading season total to 89 and moving him to 14th on the Cornhusker career list.



Carlos Polk

Bowl game statistics are not included in totals, so Polk, a senior from Rockford, Ill., finishes with 227 career tackles, six behind Jay Foreman (1995-98), his predecessor at middle linebacker.

Polk passed Ken Geddes (1967-69), Mike Anderson (1990-93) and Travis Hill (1989-92) on the list during the Colorado game. The top five on Nebraska's career list are:

1. Jerry Murtaugh	1968-70	342
2. Mike Brown	1996-99	287
3. Lee Kunz	1976-78	276
4. Clete Piller	1974-76	273
5. Steve Damkroger	1979-82	269

(*Nebraska's tackle statistics date only to 1965.)

SACK LACK

Nebraska's defense had problems getting a push up-front this season for a variety of reasons. The Cornhuskers managed only 25 quarterback sacks for 145 yards in losses, the lowest single-season totals since official statistics for sacks were first kept in 1981. The previous low total was 29 in 1982.

Nebraska set school records with 53 sacks for 395 yards in losses last season.

Senior rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch and junior weakside linebacker Randy Stella did their part, however. Each was credited with 5.5 sacks to share the team lead in that category. ■

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

FAST START

The Colorado victory was Nebraska's 30th in 37 games since Frank Solich succeeded Tom Osborne as head coach in 1998. As a result, Solich moves ahead of Dutch Meyer, with whom he had shared sixth place, on the list of best career-coaching starts in NCAA Division I-A football history.

Solich is only one victory from tying Bill Battle and John Robinson for fourth place. Walter Camp tops the list with 41 victories in 43 games at Yale from 1888 to 1890.

Osborne and Bob Devaney, Solich's predecessors, each coached 28 victories in their first three seasons at Nebraska. Those were not Devaney's first three seasons as a head coach, however.

PASSING PRIORITY

Big 12 football coaches apparently are inclined to evaluate quarterbacks on their passing. Texas Tech sophomore Kliff Kingsbury was the coaches' second-team all-conference quarterback, ahead of Nebraska's Eric Crouch and Kansas State's Jonathan Beasley, who shared third team.

Kingsbury's passing was impressive. He completed 362-of-585 for 3,418 yards and 21 touchdowns. But he also threw 17 interceptions, and his team was only 3-5 in conference play.

Oklahoma's Josh Heupel was the coaches' first-team All-Big 12 quarterback.

Five Cornhuskers were included on the coaches' first team; center Dominic Raiola, I-back Dan Alexander, tight end Tracey Wistrom, middle linebacker Carlos Polk and punter Dan Hadenfeldt. Offense guards Russ Hochstein and Toniui Fonoti were second-team selections.

Safety Troy Watchorn joined Crouch on the third team, while rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch, split end Matt Davison and cornerback Keyuo Craver received honorable mention from the coaches.

Raiola, Wistrom, Hochstein and Polk were on both the Associated Press and Football News All-Big 12 first team. The AP all-conference second team included Fonoti, Alexander, Crouch, Vanden Bosch and Hadenfeldt, while Watchorn, Craver, offensive tackle Dave Volk, I-back Correlli Buckhalter and wingback Bobby Newcombe received honorable mention, Newcombe as "all purpose." ■

THE LINE ON THE LINE

Sophomore Toniui Fonoti and seniors Dominic Raiola and Russ Hochstein all broke the previous team single-season record for "pancake" or knockdown blocks.

Fonoti led the way with 155 "pancakes," with a season-high of 19 against Texas Tech. Raiola, who held the record with 140 last season, had 145, and Hochstein had 143.

Hochstein set the single-game record with 23 against Notre Dame.

The offensive line was credited with 722 "pancakes" this season, with a high of 101 against Baylor and a low of 30 against Kansas State. The offensive line was penalized only 11 times for 103 yards, and only four quarterback sacks were attributed to breakdowns in the offensive line.

The line received a perfect grade on 60 percent or more plays in all but the Iowa game (58.2) this season, with highs of 70.7 percent against Kansas and 70.0 percent against Oklahoma. ■

FISCHER 'WAS WHAT NEBRASKA FOOTBALL IS ALL ABOUT'

Cletus Fischer was one of only two assistant coaches Bob Devaney retained on staff when he replaced Bill Jennings as head football coach at Nebraska in 1962.

Fischer was the all-important connection to the state's high school coaches and players. He was, after all, from St. Edward, Neb., and he had been a high school coach at Columbus St. Bonaventura and Omaha South before joining Jennings' staff as the offensive backs coach in 1960.

He had also played football at Nebraska, as did his brothers Ken, Rex and Pat. And his sons — C. Patrick, Tim and Dan — were Cornhusker football players, too. He "was what Nebraska football is all about," offensive line coach Milt Tenopir told the Omaha World-Herald.

Fischer died in early December, after a two-year battle with cancer, at age 75.

Tenopir's words probably define him best. The two coached the line together until 1985, when Fischer became an athletic department fund-raiser before finally retiring.

Fischer's career began at St. Edward High School, as a six-man player. He was a halfback at Nebraska from 1945 to 1948. And he played briefly with the NFL's New York Giants.

"He had a great devotion to the state," Congressman and former Cornhusker Coach Tom Osborne told the Lincoln Journal Star. "He really believed in the people of Nebraska." ■

Plenty Of Positives

Overcoming adversity and getting better are two things Alexander will remember



**Mike
BABCOCK**

MORE THAN ANYTHING, what Dan Alexander will remember about his career at Nebraska will be the injuries, "the pains and the low things I've gone through," the senior I-back said.

There are plenty of positive things for him to recall. But he'll remember "just being able to overcome things, being able to get better after sustaining injuries I thought would be career-ending and coming through all kinds of adversity here, being

able to overcome that and get better," he said.

Injuries are an unavoidable, of course. They're as much a part of the game as artificial surfaces, exaggerated 40-yard dash times and television's disruption of once-predictable kickoffs. But Alexander has had to deal with probably more than his share, almost from the beginning.

During his first spring game in 1997, he suffered a torn left ACL but was back playing four months later. And on the second series of the Kansas State game in 1998, he suffered a right knee strain, which led to surgery to repair the lateral collateral ligament, as well as a hamstring tendon.

Those were his most significant injuries. But there were others, among them a lacerated hand that occurred early in last season's Big 12 championship game against Texas.

The laceration required 13 stitches to close, and as a result, Alexander carried only four times. But he was back for the Fiesta Bowl game, rushing for 108 yards and a touchdown.

Officially, he missed only three games because of injury during his four seasons.

He and Correll Buckhalter, with whom he has alternated, have both been durable and resilient. "Whenever they've been called upon, they've been there," said Coach Frank Solich.

"It's never been the case where they've taken themselves out of a game unless it's been a serious injury that generally required surgery. Other than that, they have played through everything that you would hope a player would play through but maybe not expect, necessarily."

In addition, the two I-backs "have been very unselfish," Solich said. "There are guys that would not want to share the time. That would be obvious by their attitude, by their actions."

"But that is not the case with these guys. They're willing to share time. And, I think, they're even willing to share time beyond just themselves in the mix, as far as two I-backs."

Even so, Solich was asked more than once this season to defend Alexander and Buckhalter. And more than once he declined to defend them, claiming that no defense was necessary.

"I don't feel like I have to defend his play," Solich said of Alexander following the Kansas State game. "He has, I think, played extremely well. And I think people realize that."

Most, but certainly not all.

Alexander has earned a place among Nebraska's best I-backs. He was a key element in the Cornhuskers' leading the nation in rushing this season. He ran for 1,154 yards and eight touchdowns. He averaged 6.3 yards per carry. And he rushed for 100 or more yards seven times.

Yet Alexander, whose humility matches his size, has downplayed the numbers.

"Definitely, any time you cross the 1,000-yard mark, it's kind of a milestone. It makes me feel good, just because a lot of people said I couldn't do it," he said. "But for me, kind of my main goal at the beginning of the year was to better my yards-per-carry average from last year."

He averaged 6.5 yards per carry as a junior, just a smidgen more. Nevertheless, "that's what I look at more (than the yardage)," said Alexander. "A thousand yards, that's a bonus."

Bonus or not, he was only the second Cornhusker in the last five seasons to rush for 1,000 or more yards. The other was Ahman Green (1,877) in 1997. And his 1,154 rushing yards rank 13th all-time at Nebraska, just behind Doug DuBose's 1,161 yards (and eight touchdowns) in 1985.

Still, some fans have been reluctant to give credit where credit was clearly due.

It's nothing personal. Rather, Alexander's accomplishments, like those of his teammates, have been diminished because of Nebraska's losses against Oklahoma and Kansas State.

"Looming over our head is kind of the history of Nebraska, this winning tradition," Alexander said prior to the Colorado game. "You always have this, 'You have to be good' to do this system justice. And so for us having two losses, everybody's like, 'Oh goodness, they're

horrible.'"

Three national championships in Tom Osborne's final four seasons as head coach have created unrealistic expectations for the program and placed unreasonable standards on players.

Many of the players, Alexander among them, have seemed apologetic about a season that the majority of Division I-A programs would covet. Going into the Colorado game, the seniors were trying to "make sure when we leave that this program hasn't been tarnished by us being here," Alexander said.

"We want to better this program as much as we can."

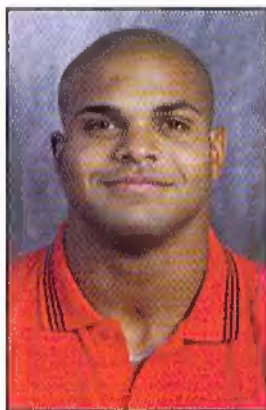
With a victory against Northwestern in the Alamo Bowl, Nebraska's record over the last four seasons would be 44-7. And Alexander has contributed to that remarkable success.

Not everyone has appreciated his accomplishments. But Solich certainly has.

"He has done all that we've asked him to do," Solich said.

Alexander understands he can take pride in what he has done. "When it's over, I'm going to look back at my career and say, 'You know what? There's something good here,'" he said.

The truth is, there was a lot of something good. ■



Dan Alexander rushed for 1,154 yards and 8 touchdowns.



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Bob SCHALLER

A LOST SEASON?

Hardly.

Expectations exceeded? Definitely not. Expectations met? Some.

For a lot of Husker fans, this season will be a letdown. All of the hype of being ranked No. 1 — and a possible wire-to-wire run — was torn down with trips (literally and figuratively) at Oklahoma and Kansas State. In fact, Nebraska, based on what

Texas A&M did to Kansas State, arguably isn't among the best 25 percent of the teams in the Big 12.

Certainly, Nebraska still has top-three talent (nationally) and has a program that, from top to bottom, ranks among the top three in the nation.

The winds of change are going to blow through after the Alamo Bowl, with a proud group of seniors ready to hit the road (two of those, in fact, were seniors in 1999 — Jason Schwab and Dan Hadenfeldt).

That is what, sadly, is going to be lost in the breakdown — and the build-up — that will soon follow the end of the season.

There were some very special players here the last few years. Russ Hochstein was a 240-pound lightly regarded (nationally) recruit when he arrived here five years ago. He leaves as a top-notch player and a great young man.

Carlos Polk spent countless hours with former Husker Kenny Walker in the weight room, literally shaping himself into the all-American and likely first-round NFL pick that he is today.

The secondary also loses a couple of seniors. Joe Walker electrified us a couple of times with returns. Clint Finley seemed poised to step in and take over Mike Brown's role of run-support rover this season. Though it didn't quite work out that way, Finley played a big part in Nebraska's successes the past four or five years.

Just about everyone is going to miss at least one of Nebraska's outgoing receivers, from the mercurial Bobby Newcombe to the consistent Matt Davidson. John Gibson never really lived up to his advance billing, but then this year he found himself and found a bigger role with the offense.

Dan Alexander and Correll Buckhalter were as consistent as they were unspectacular. Yet both left us with highlight-tape runs. Indeed, Alexander's dash against Colorado in 1999 was something a lot of us will never forget.

The Huskers lose a great leader in defensive tackle Loran Kaiser. His value was never really appreciated or understood until he was lost for a large part of the season. His appendix decided it was exit time in the preseason, and then he was sidelined by a lingering foot injury. The Huskers never really recovered from the loss of Kaiser, especially

after some of the underclass help was either injured or didn't develop.

Schwab and Hadenfeldt were two warriors who epitomized playing for the love of the game. Hadenfeldt, a likely late draftee or free-agent signee in the NFL, probably would have been in better bargaining position had he left for the NFL after last season — his "first" senior year. But he came back, and that was a key in helping keep Josh Brown progressing along the right track. It wasn't often reported, but Hadenfeldt was a calming influence on Brown at key times, and his impact on Brown's development was immeasurable.

The walk-on group was a one-of-a-kind from top to bottom. These were some of the best stories on the team.

Brandon Mooberry came from Lexington and was several times on the verge of cracking the top two spots on the depth chart at rush end. Injuries and recruited players had an impact on Mooberry being a career back-up. But he'll graduate with honors and the respect of all of his teammates, who regarded him a starter in every other way possible.

Tom Beveridge, from Sutherland, was another of the outstate Nebraska success stories. Many times Beveridge found himself on the scout team blocking the likes of Mike Brown or Tony Ortiz. Yet he stuck it out, and this year became one of the best blockers on the team, gaining more playing time, even in big games.

And of course the story to end all stories was Troy Watchorn. The Columbus walk-on came from a place worse than nowhere, beating back the demons of depression and alcohol to

become a key member of the team and even a member of the starting lineup.

I wrote up Troy two or three times this year, and each time I was flooded with mail wanting to hear more about him. I have a strong feeling he impacted way more lives than he ever could imagine. People could relate to his story, and he became a sort of "Rudy" for Nebraska, though Troy's ability was certainly never an issue.

Credit Frank Solich and the staff for the positive effect they had on these young men — though all obviously have strong families and upbringing, of course. Yet it should be more than a footnote that these young men all received the direction, and even nurturing, that they needed as they went from boys to men.

So call this year what you might, but don't fail to use the word success.

Because if you don't, you're missing the real story at Nebraska. ■



Senior defensive tackle Loran Kaiser missed three full games because of injury.

Bob Schaller covers the Huskers for the North Platte Telegraph and Scottsbluff Star-Herald. He can be reached at schallerbrc@aol.com.

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What's The Difference?

Colorado kicker's missed field goal would have changed perception of 1999 Huskers



Curt McKEEVER

NEBRASKA GOES 9-2, gives its fans a nice bowl trip to San Antonio, and yet you still hear some grumbling.

Chalk it up to preseason No. 1 expectations that probably were a little unrealistic.

Not that Nebraska couldn't have ended up with a better fate than playing Northwestern in the Alamo Bowl. But on closer examination, that destination for NU shouldn't come across as a huge surprise.

Naturally, it was only natural for Big Red fans to be excited following last year's marvelous season.

But if truth be told, there's not any difference between Nebraska going 12-1 last year and having a chance to be 10-2 this season.

Last year, the Cornhuskers got the chance to avenge their only loss in the Big 12 Conference championship and then wowed the nation by blasting a Tennessee team chock full of NFL talent in the Fiesta Bowl. NU became everyone's favorite to become the next national champion.

The main reason, of course, was because Jeremy Aldrich missed 34-yard field goal. Remember that?

If the most accurate kicker in Colorado history comes through on the final play of the fourth quarter in Boulder, all of a sudden Nebraska is looked at as just another solid program instead of the cat's meow. The Big 12 title goes poof, along with a spot in a Bowl Championship Series game. And the cross examination of Frank Solich is in high gear.

The fact Nebraska went 12-1 last year looks even more impressive when you consider just three players off that team were taken in the NFL draft.

Now, forward to this season.

If Josh Brown makes a 28-yard field goal at Kansas State, the Huskers probably get the rematch with Oklahoma and are in position for a BCS game appearance.

And considering almost all of the heavies have to play in Lincoln next season, who's to say the 'N' helmets aren't projected to be the fairest of them all again?

But let's look at that NFL prospect list again.

Rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch and linebacker Carlos Polk are the only senior defensive players who show up on pre-draft lists. You can say cornerback Keyuo Craver and maybe linebacker Randy Stella will be there next season. But still, that's just four players.

Contrast that to Nebraska's last national championship team, when the Huskers had 10 players on defense — 11 if you count Scott Frost, taken to be a strong safety — who were drafted following their senior seasons.

The reality — and it's not a bad thing — is that Nebraska is a solid, top-10 program. One that could win or lose to anyone else in that category, but one that given the right schedule, a few good bounces of the ball and some luck on field goals, is capable of bringing home the big trophy.

Unfortunately for Solich, that's not good enough for many who watched Nebraska capture three crown jewels and play for another in Tom Osborne's final five seasons.

People! Those kind of streaks come around about as often as Halley's Comet.

But as public opinion about Solich fluctuates, it should be clear that Nebraska isn't close to crashing off the national college football map.

So maybe Solich doesn't look like the genius last year's team made him to be. Personally, though, I think bowl games outside of the national championship give an inaccurate barometer of a program's true strength.

Put yourself in the shoes of a 21-year-old. Yeah, you want to win whatever potato chip-sponsored bowl you're in. But if it's not for all the ultimate prize, that trip should be one where the participants can go out and enjoy the sites, maybe even break curfew a night or two.

Now, take this season. Nebraska is 9-2, and Solich is a little edgy because he feels like a running back who's just gotten peppered and squeezed racing down a tight row of blocking dummies.

Or maybe he saw that Bloomberg Information Service poll in October, the one where his colleagues were asked to name the top coach in the game.

Eighty-eight of the 114 NCAA Division I-A coaches responded, and Penn State's Joe Paterno received the most votes. Kansas State's Bill Snyder was third, and then a shocker. Tied with Wisconsin's Barry Alvarez at No. 6 was . . . Colorado's Gary Barnett.

Solich didn't even make the top 10, which makes me think either: (a.) Frank doesn't have enough years of service to qualify, (b.) the poll was taken immediately after the loss at Oklahoma, or (c.) Nebraska's coach needs to follow the lead of nice-guy Barnett and go to more socials.

I don't know anyone who dislikes Barnett. And while he pulled off a minor miracle by guiding Northwestern to Big Ten championships in 1995 and 96, he's still only 45-58-1 as a head coach. That includes a 10-13 mark at Colorado, which was an established top-25 program when he took over before last season.

Solich is 30-7, which is a better record than any of the top choices in the Bloomberg survey produced after their first three seasons.

Too bad that if he doesn't bring home a national championship before he decides to put down the whistle, he'll be viewed as a coach who, as he likes to say, didn't get it done.

I suppose that's why he's paid the big bucks, but considering the quality that exists in the Big 12, it's going to take a very special team, and inevitably some luck, before the Huskers hoist another national title trophy.

While you're waiting for that to happen, take a deep breath and allow yourself to enjoy what should be an entertaining Alamo Bowl between two teams that will look to turn things wide-open. Besides, those 9-3 or 10-2 seasons occur a lot more frequently than do national championships — at Nebraska and everywhere else. ■



Frank Solich has a 30-7 record entering the Alamo Bowl.

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter covering the University of Nebraska at Omaha Journal Star. In addition to his work as a writer, he is also a coach and a former player.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON NEBRASKA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONS CLUB

Construction is underway on the Nebraska Alumni Association Champions Club, a two-story pavilion across from Memorial Stadium scheduled for completion by the opening of the 2001 Nebraska football season. The pavilion will be located on North Tenth Street, north of the Big Red Shop which will be razed to make room for Champions Club parking and landscaping. The association signed an agreement earlier this year to buy the Big Red Shop.

restrooms; the upper level a temperature-controlled space that can be used year-round for meetings or conferences. A surface lot with 400 parking spaces will surround the facility and provide weekday parking for university faculty, students and staff. Sinclair Hille & Associates of Lincoln is the architect, Sampson Construction Co. of

the builder on a number of campus construction projects (including the stadium skybox addition) and "is proud to continue its association with



"This project enhances the alumni association's tradition of pride in and commitment to NU, and the university's plans for growth and excellence," said Ed Paquette, executive director of the Nebraska Alumni Association. "And it's being carried out by Nebraska contractors and financed through club memberships. No university or taxpayer dollars are involved." To date, 150 "founding"

member," said Jim Hille, principal architect. "We've designed a building that complements the existing architecture in the stadium corridor and we look forward to spending many football Saturdays here. I look for it to be the center of game-day festivities."

Equally excited about the project are landscaper Dave Lanoha and builder John Sampson who also are Champions Club founding members.

"Our landscaping plan is consistent with the rest of the campus," said Lanoha. "We want to give this facility a classic outdoor setting — a place where football fans, their families and friends will want to gather for tailgate parties."

Sampson Construction has been



Lincoln the builder and Lanoha Nursery of Omaha the landscaper.

the university through the alumni association on this innovative project," said John Sampson. "From the beginning, we knew we wanted to be a part of this next great Nebraska tradition."

The Nebraska Alumni Association will manage the Champions Club, using the space for events that exceed Wick Alumni Center capacity. The 20,000-square-foot building will comfortably accommodate 1,500 people. On home game days, the facility will be open to members only. The rest of the year it will be available for use by the university, alumni and others in the community.

"I can already visualize the excitement at the Nebraska Alumni Association Champions Club for the Notre Dame game on Sept. 8, 2001," said Bill Dana, Champions Club member from Valley. "This will be the place to be."

Further information about the Champions Club is available from Bob Stelter, director of marketing and sales for the club, at:

(402) 472-2841

or

(888) 353-1874.



memberships have been sold.

The lower level of the Champions Club will be an open-air pavilion with





Wide

Cornhuskers preparing for high-powered offense of surprising Northwestern

By Mike Babcock

Given a choice, Scott Shanle would prefer a different Alamo Bowl opponent.

It's not that Nebraska's sophomore strongside linebacker has anything against Northwestern, the Big Ten tri-champion. It's just that the Wildcats' spread offense isn't to his liking.

"They do spread you out. There's no question about it," said Cornhusker Coach Frank Solich. "There will be four wideouts a good share of the time, no backs sometimes."

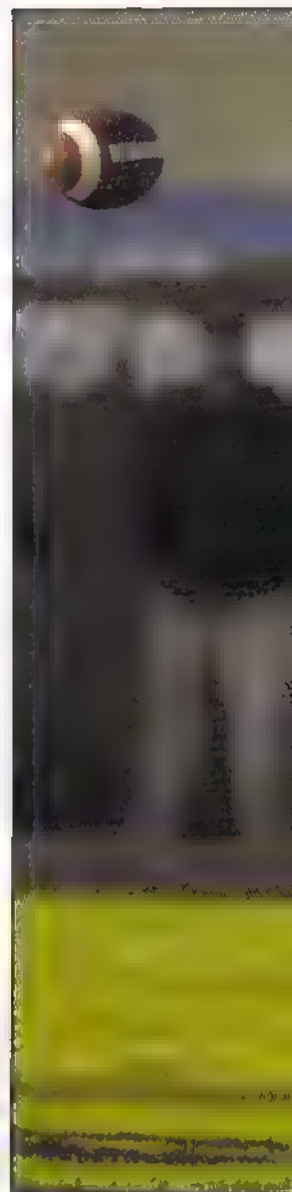
And with such alignments, a "nickel" back typically replaces Shanle, the starter.

He saw limited action this season in games against Texas Tech and Oklahoma, teams that try to spread the defense and rely heavily on the pass. In the Texas Tech game, "I think I played under five snaps," said Shanle. "Against Oklahoma I played a little bit more, but not much."

"That's the toughest part about playing SAM (linebacker). Your playing time is determined by what the other team does offensively. So that's nothing I can control."



Big Ten Conference tri-champion Northwestern features junior tailback Damien Anderson (above), who was second in the nation in rushing. The Wildcats' potent offense also includes quarterback Zak Kustok (right), a Notre Dame transfer, who has passed for 2,251 yards and 18 touchdowns.



Because it was able to do a lot offensively, Northwestern was the surprise team in the Big Ten this season, finishing in a tie for the conference title with Rose Bowl-bound Purdue and Outback Bowl-bound Ohio State, despite being picked to finish no higher than 10th in the conference.

The Wildcats ranked third in the nation in total offense, averaging 475.6 yards per game. Quarterback Zak Kustok, a Notre Dame transfer, directs an attack that features tailback Damien Anderson

Anderson, a junior, was second in the nation to Texas Christian's LaDarian Tomlinson in rushing, with 1,914 yards and 22 touchdowns. "Damien is certainly a legitimate All-American type player, a legitimate Heisman (Trophy) type player, without question," Solich said.

"He's got great vision and great ability to instinctively get things done."

Anderson has gotten those things done, in part, because of Kustok, who has completed 191-of-328 passes for 2,251 yards and 18 touchdowns, with

Open



but it seems like when we really need a play or a big stop, they've (the defenders) been able to come through for us," said Walker, who doesn't plan major defensive changes before playing the Cornhuskers. "You don't reinvent the wheel this time of year. We've had some success doing the things we do. If someone is fixin' to score, I hope it's us.

"Or at least, I hope we have the ball last anyway."

How much of a part Shanle will play in trying to prevent that is uncertain. But he'll prepare as if he'll be involved. Still, it's difficult, or at least it was before the Texas Tech and Oklahoma games because "you don't get as many snaps (in practice) as you do against a conventional offense," he said.

Defensive coordinator Craig Bohl, "during those weeks against those teams, would come up to me and tell me, 'You've got to be ready; you never know what they're going to do. They might do something different. They might use the tight end,'" said Shanle, who lines up on the tight end.

"So I just took that to mind and prepared every week just like it was a conventional offense."

Nebraska has more than a week to get ready for Northwestern, of course, and even though he isn't likely to get as many snaps during the bowl practices as he normally would, "I'm going to use this time," Shanle said. "I've got two years left here and I want to use this time to get better.

"If I can show it during this game, that's great. If not, then I'll continue on through the off-season and through spring ball and prepare for next year. As far as the SAMs, we still do our normal stuff. And me, personally, I'm watching film and I'll watch what the 'nickel' would do.

"During these weeks, I just kind of put myself in where the 'nickel' would be."

Sometimes there's a practical reason for that.

only seven interceptions.

Kustok also has rushed for 450 yards and nine touchdowns.

"I would say that Damien Anderson would be the first to say Zak Kustok has made it all possible," said Northwestern Coach Randy Walker. "He spreads it out, keeps people honest."

Despite Anderson's impressive rushing yardage, the offense hasn't been one-dimensional.

"They like to run the football by spreading you out, and they've been very successful in doing that," Solich

said. "They have a balanced attack, however. They're (averaging) over 200 yards passing and over 200 yards rushing. So you've got to be ready for a pretty multiple team."

To be exact, the Wildcats have averaged 257.3 yards rushing and 218.4 yards passing.

They've also averaged 38.5 points per game, topping 50 three times. But they've allowed an average of 30.4 points per game, and they ranked near the bottom of the Big Ten defensively.

"We have given up some points,

"I've been caught in there a few times when I'm not supposed to be, so it happens," said Shanle. "That's another reason you've got to be prepared to know what the 'nickel' does."

Even though the Alamo Bowl isn't an upper-tier bowl game, there are benefits from being involved. San Antonio, Texas, where the game is played, is considered a fan-friendly destination and the participants can get valuable recruiting exposure not only in Texas but also on national television.

The ESPN cable network will televise the game in prime time. And it's the only college game that night. "That probably plays in our favor some," Solich said. "Nebraska generally attracts a large number of TV sets around the country, so I believe we'll be watched, and watched by a lot of people."

"That always plays in your favor when it comes time to recruit."

It does particularly if a team is successful. And if the Cornhuskers are to be successful against Northwestern, it figures that the Blackshirts will have to step up.

Northwestern's offense poses a formidable challenge, and "that's what we want," said Nebraska rush end Kyle Vanden Bosch. "We want the pressure to be on the defense."

"We're looking for the defense to step up here. We've struggled a little bit as of late and we really want to come out and dominate a game, play really well against a good team with a balanced attack. We have a lot of different things to prepare for. But I think come game time, we're going to be ready."

Shanle is determined to be ready, even though he might not get to play a lot. And if he doesn't, he'll encourage those who are playing. "Going through things like that is difficult," he said.

"You stand there and your chances of playing are slim to none. But you've got to look at it as, you're not here to build your personal accolades. You're here to win as a team. And if you're not out there helping them, you're going to support the guys that are out there." ■



Randy Walker

Second year as head coach
Record: 11-11 (8-3 this year)
Previously head coach at Miami (Ohio) for 9 years



Frank Solich

Third year as head coach
Record: 30-7 (9-2 this year)
Previously assistant at Nebraska for 19 years

Alamo Bowl No. 4 on Big 12's List

Nebraska had hopes of getting into a Bowl Championship Series bowl. Sugar Bowl officials indicated the Cornhuskers were on their list. But the BCS system allows for only two at-large entrants in its four bowls. And the Fiesta Bowl selected both, eliminating Nebraska from consideration.

The Fiesta Bowl had first pick following the matching of Oklahoma and Florida State in the BCS national championship game in the Orange Bowl and opted for Notre Dame and Oregon State, apparently picking the 10-1 Beavers, in part, because of pressure from the Pac-10 Conference.

Pac-10 Commissioner Thomas Hansen announced that his conference would withdraw from the BCS when its contract was up if Oregon State were bypassed for one of the at-large berths.

In any case, the Sugar Bowl had no choice but to match Big East champion Miami against Southeastern Conference champ Florida, leaving Nebraska available for one of the bowls with which the Big 12 has a working agreement. And though the Cornhuskers were the conference's highest-ranked team behind No. 1 Oklahoma, they ended up in the fourth bowl on the Big 12's list.

The second, the Cotton Bowl, picked Kansas State. And the third, the Holiday Bowl, picked Texas. In fact, the Holiday Bowl selected the Longhorns before the Big 12 championship game.

"We don't control how it ends up,"

said Nebraska Coach Frank Solich.

"We had a chance to be a part in that (the BCS) by winning all our games. And of course once that was out the window, then you're just at the call of where it fits, in what slot."

The Alamo Bowl appearance will be the first for the Cornhuskers, who are playing in a bowl game for a 32nd consecutive season. They have played in 11 different bowl games all-time.

Nebraska will be playing in what is considered a non-New Year's Day bowl game for only the second time since 1980. The Cornhuskers played in the Holiday Bowl in Solich's first season as coach.

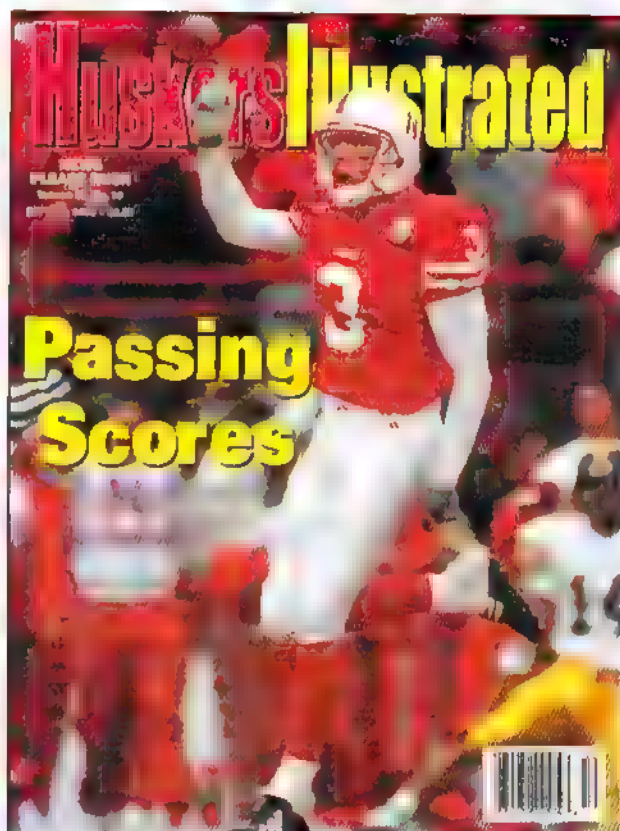
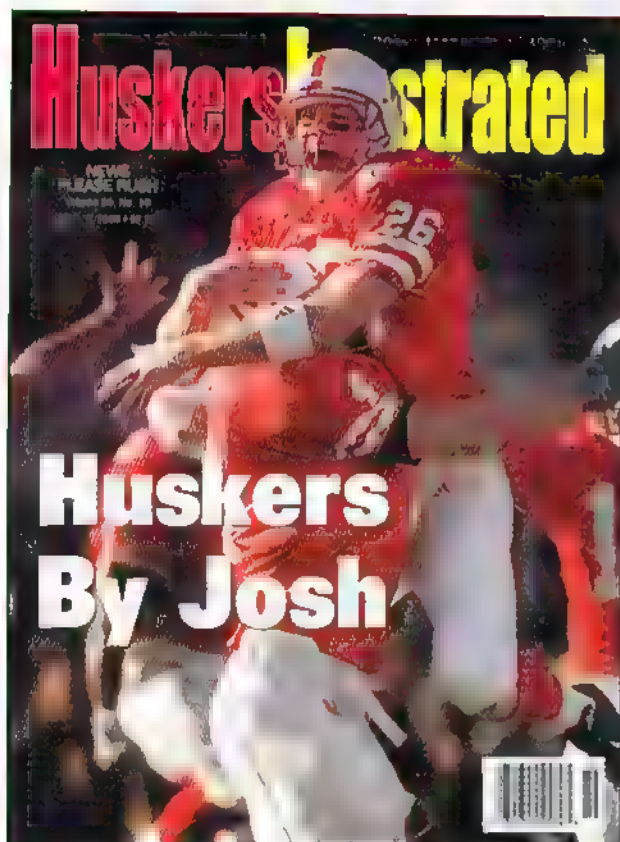
"It really doesn't matter to me," said Nebraska senior rush end and co-captain Kyle Vanden Bosch. "We have a chance to go down and play a great team, at a great bowl game. Really it's just a chance for us to finish this thing off strong, represent our program and our conference."

Because of its tradition and national appeal, Notre Dame received the Fiesta Bowl bid despite the fact that it lost to Nebraska and finished with the same record and a lower national ranking.

"There are reasons why they (bowls) pick who they pick, and it's really not my place to argue with who they selected," Vanden Bosch said during a news conference to announce the Cornhuskers' bowl destination. "We're not going to demand a recount and try dragging this thing out."

"We're happy with where we're at. It's going to be a great way to spend the holidays." ■

Happy Holidays!



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Making a Difference

Husker guard Hochstein enjoys interaction with young students

The youngster wanted to know if Russ Hochstein had ever beaten up anyone.

Hochstein was taken aback by the question. "Kids are growing up way different than when I was growing up," Nebraska's senior offensive guard and co-captain said.

"It's weird to think younger kids are fighting. I don't ever remember getting in fights at school when I was in the fifth and sixth grade. They've got violence. They're worried about that now."

So the 6-foot-4, 290-pound Hochstein answered the question as best he could.

He told the youngster that he "never grew up fighting anybody because that wasn't the way we ever did anything. I said no one ever wins in a fight," he said. "Somebody gets hurt, either emotionally or physically. One way or another, both people get hurt. It's just stupid, fighting."

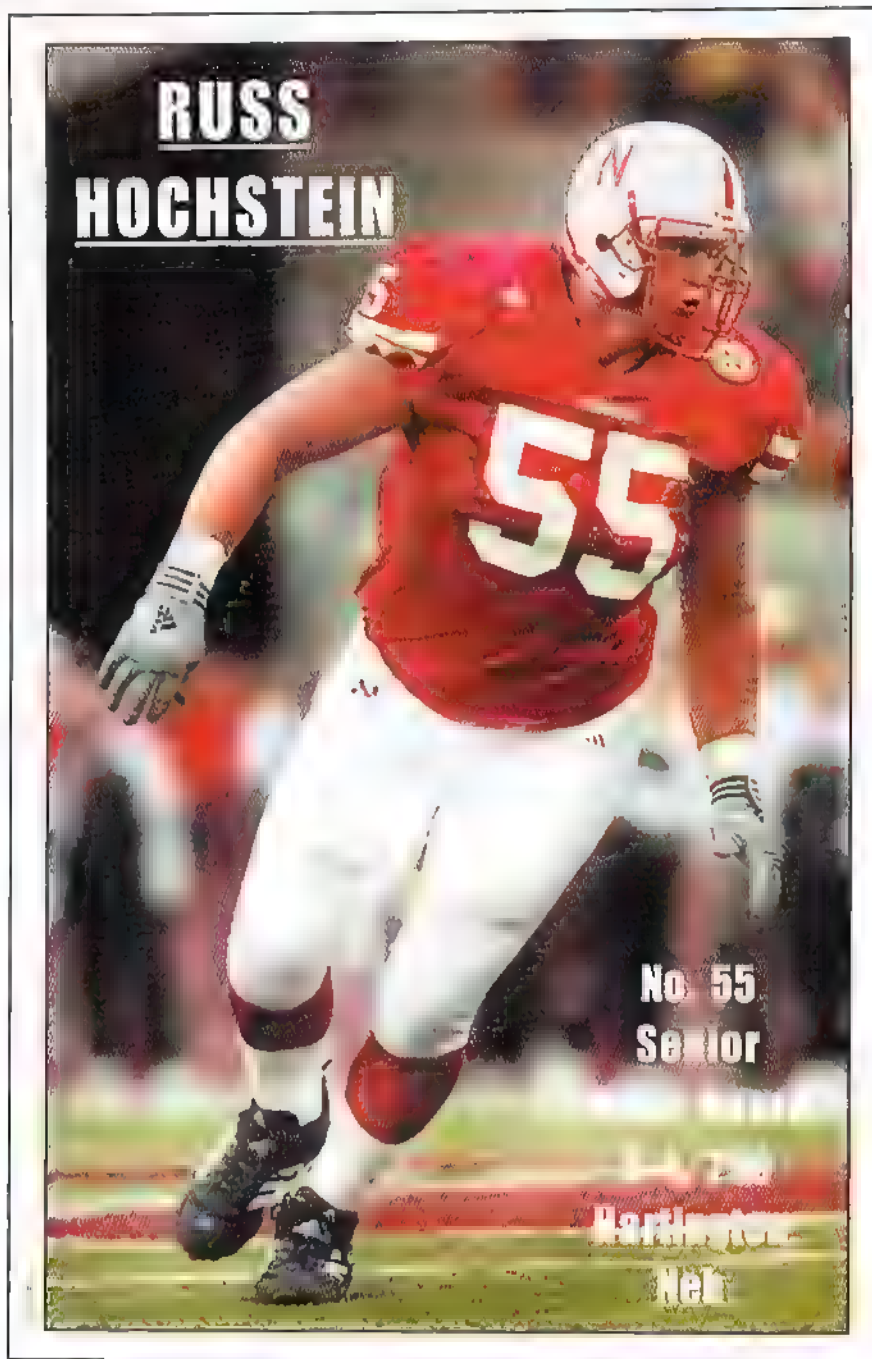
"You wake up the next morning wondering, 'Why did I do that?'"

Hochstein said the young questioner should always go home and sleep on it. "You wake up the next day, and I guarantee you 90 percent of the time you won't have any thoughts of getting in a fight with anybody. You won't ever want to bother with it," he said. "It's a nuisance."

The other students in the class "were like, 'That's very true,'" he said.

Hochstein has tried to impart such wisdom to schoolchildren throughout his Nebraska career. And with a reduced course load (by design) in his final semester of work toward a degree in business management, he has been able to devote more time to speaking in schools.

He has talked to students from the second grade to the eighth grade, using his celebrity status as a Cornhusker football player to get his



message across

"Some kids don't follow football," he said. "They don't know who we are, and that's fine because that's not their interest."

"But the big thing is, when you talk to them, relate things to their age. That's important. Don't speak over their heads. But don't speak below them, either, because they're not

dumb."

Hochstein has been like many of his teammates, volunteering to make a difference in the community. He spoke on the importance of education and the dangers of drugs and alcohol.

"I really enjoyed it. I always have," he said of the interaction.

His community service as well as his Cornhusker career is quickly com-

ing to a close. After the Alamo Bowl, with degree in hand, he will turn his attention to the National Football League.

His goal is to play professionally "It's a dream," he said. "Growing up, what kid doesn't think, 'Man, wouldn't that be great to play in the NFL, make money and get to play a sport that's fun?'"

He admits such a view is naive. "The reality is, it doesn't work that way," he said. "The NFL is a business, and I think you have to adjust to that if you're going to get there."

He's determined to make that adjustment and get there. "I don't want any regrets going out. I want to make sure I give it my all, my best shot, work hard to get there and try out. Whatever I can do to play, I'll do because I don't want someday later in life to be going, 'Man, I could have given it a shot.'"

"That's the important thing. I've been gifted with some pretty good talent. I've played with some great guys. I just think it would be a waste if I don't give it a shot. I really see it that way."

If he doesn't succeed, however, "I won't consider my life being over," he said.

That isn't to say he won't miss football when he checks in his pads for the final time. But "you have to accept it and then take that competitiveness and turn it over into something else, into a job situation or something like that," Hochstein said. "You need to know that going in."

Otherwise, "you can set yourself up for some big failure."

Regardless of how well-prepared an athlete is to turn to something else, however, "it will be tough one day to know it's all over with, that you're no longer part of the hype," said Hochstein.

"You walk around town, you run into people and they know who you are. Five years down the road, if I don't play anymore, people won't know who I am; they won't recognize me."

While he has been able to, he has tried to use his recognition as a Cornhusker to make a difference in the lives of local schoolchildren. "I think it's a lie if people deny we're role models," he said.

"People know who we are. They watch us. And it's important to be that role model." ■

Future Football Schedules

(Dates subject to Change)

2001		2002	
Sept. 1	Troy State	Aug. 30	Troy State
Sept. 8	*Notre Dame, 7 p.m., ABC	Sept. 7	Utah State
Sept. 15	Rice	Sept. 14	at Penn State
Sept. 27	**at Missouri, 6 p.m. FSN	Oct. 5	at Iowa State
Oct. 6	Iowa State	Oct. 12	Missouri
Oct. 13	at Baylor	Oct. 19	at Oklahoma St.
Oct. 20	Texas Tech	Oct. 26	at Texas A&M
Oct. 27	Oklahoma	Nov. 2	Texas
Nov. 3	at Kansas	Nov. 9	Kansas
Nov. 10	Kansas State	Nov. 16	at Kansas State
Nov. 23	at Colorado	Nov. 29/30	Colorado
Dec. 1	Big 12 Champ.	Dec. 7	Big 12 Champ.

*The Notre Dame at Nebraska game on Saturday, Sept. 8, has been moved to 7 p.m. (CDT) for a national prime-time broadcast on ABC.

**NU's Big 12 Conference opener at Missouri will likely be moved to Thursday, Sept. 27 with a 6 p.m. kickoff for national telecast by FOX Sports Net, but the move was not official at press time. Other times are TBA

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2000 Schedule

(Team's current record)

1	Sept. 2	San Jose State (7-5), W 49-13
2	Sept. 9	at Notre Dame (9-2), W 27-24
3	Sept. 23	Iowa (3-9), W 42-13
4	Sept. 30	Missouri (3-8), W 42-24
5	Oct. 7	at Iowa State (8-3), W 49-27
6	Oct. 14	at Texas Tech (7-5), W 56-3
7	Oct. 21	Baylor (2-8), W 59-0
8	Oct. 28	at Oklahoma (12-0), L 31-14
9	Nov. 4	Kansas (4-7), W 56-17
10	Nov. 11	at Kansas St. (10-3), L 29-28
11	Nov. 24	Colorado (3-8), W 34-32
12	Dec. 30	vs. Northwestern (8-3)
Alamo Bowl, San Antonio, 7 p.m., ESPN		

Big 12 Standings

	North		All	
	Conf.			
Nebraska	6	2	9	2
Kansas State	6	2	9	3
Iowa State	5	3	8	3
Colorado	3	5	3	8
Kansas	2	6	4	7
Missouri	2	6	3	8

	South		All	
	Conf.			
Oklahoma	8	0	12	0
Texas	7	1	9	2
Texas A&M	5	3	7	4
Texas Tech	3	5	7	5
Oklahoma State	1	7	3	8
Baylor	0	8	2	9

Bowl schedule (times CST)

Galleryfurniture.com,

Dec. 27, Houston

E. Carolina vs. Texas Tech, 7 p.m., ESPN2

Insight.com, Dec. 28, Tucson

Iowa St. vs. Pittsburgh, 6:30 p.m., ESPN

Holiday, Dec. 29, San Diego

Texas vs. Oregon, 7:30 p.m., ESPN

Alamo, Dec. 30, San Antonio

Nebraska vs. Northwestern, 7 p.m., ESPN

Independence,

Dec. 31, Shreveport

Texas A&M vs. Miss. St., 7 p.m., ESPN

Cotton, Jan. 1, Dallas

Kansas St. vs. Tennessee, 10 a.m., FOX

Orange, Jan. 3, Miami

Oklahoma vs. Florida State, 7 p.m., ABC

Big Ten Standings

	Conf.	All
Michigan	6	2
Northwestern	6	2
Purdue	6	2
Ohio State	5	3
Wisconsin	4	4
Minnesota	4	4
Penn State	4	4
Iowa	3	5
Illinois	2	6
Michigan State	2	6
Indiana	2	6

Bowl schedule (times CST)

MicronPC.com, Dec. 28, Miami

N. Carolina St. vs. Minnesota, 6 p.m., TBS

Sun, Dec. 28, El Paso

Wisconsin vs. UCLA, 1:15 p.m., CBS

Alamo, Dec. 30, San Antonio

Nebraska vs. Northwestern, 7 p.m., ESPN

Outback, Jan. 1, Tampa

S. Carolina vs. Ohio State, 10 a.m., ESPN

Citrus, Jan. 1, Orlando

Michigan vs. Auburn, noon, ABC

Rose, Jan. 1, Pasadena

Purdue vs. Washington, 4 p.m., ABC

Game 12

Northwestern

Dec. 30

Location: Evanston, Ill.

Enrollment: 17,500

2000 record: 8-3

Coach: Randy Walker, 2nd year

Series: Nebraska leads series 2-1



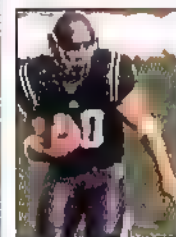
7 p.m. (ESPN),

Alamodome, San Antonio, Texas

Wildcat to Watch

Junior running back **Damien Anderson** was named first team All American by the Associated Press. It was the sixth All-America honor for Anderson, who was also one of three finalists for the Doak Walker Award as the nation's top running back and finished fifth in voting for the Heisman Trophy.

Anderson set single-season records for rushing yards (1,914) and touchdowns (22). He finished second nationally in rushing with 174.0 yards per game and shattered Lorenzo White's Big Ten records for rushing yards and rushing average in conference games. Anderson averaged 6.5 yards per attempt and carried 293 times without fumbling.



Quick Facts

Coach Randy Walker has agreed to a long-term contract extension, scheduled to keep him at Northwestern through 2007.

In just his second season in Evanston, Walker led the Wildcats to an 8-3 regular season record and a share of the Big Ten championship. He has been named the Big Ten Coach of the Year.

The Alamo Bowl will feature two of the top offenses in the country. Northwestern ranked third in total offense (475.6) and eighth in rushing offense (257.3 ypg). Nebraska led the nation in rushing offense at 349.3 yards per game and was sixth in total offense at 460 ypg.

Northwestern (8-3)

Aug. 31	No. Illinois, W 35-17
Sept. 9	Duke, W 38-5
Sept. 16	at TCU, L 41-14
Sept. 23	at Wisconsin, W 47-44
Sept. 30	at Michigan St., W 37-17
Oct. 7	Indiana, W 52-33
Oct. 14	Purdue, L 41-28
Oct. 28	at Minnesota, W 41-35
Nov. 4	Michigan, W 54-51
Nov. 11	at Iowa, L 27-17
Nov. 18	Illinois, W 61-23

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

QB	19	Teddy Johnson	5-11	300	18
RB	21	Jon Schweghardt	5-11	186	18
RB	27	Leon Brockmeier	5-7	201	18
RB	74	Derek Martinez	5-8	202	18
RB	23	Lance Coleman	5-8	213	18
RB	22	Matt Ulrich	5-7	206	18
QB	28	Austin King	6-2	280	18
RB	26	Carl Matejka	5-7	202	18
RB	72	Jeff Roehl	5-7	211	18
RB	24	Adam Fay	5-7	217	18
RB	25	Mike Souza	5-7	204	18
RB	73	Ben Kennedy	5-7	209	18
TE	15	David Farmer	6-5	245	18
TE	17	Elio Worley	6-5	252	18
QB	13	Zak Kuslok	6-2	280	18
RB	20	Matt Danielson	5-9	222	18
RB	22	Damian Anderson	5-11	232	18
RB	23	Kevin Lawrence	5-11	238	18
RB	24	Wheeler Cortright	5-11	238	18
RB	25	Glenn Latt	5-10	228	18
RB	26	Derrick Thompson	5-9	272	18
RB	27	Sam Simmons	5-10	217	18
RB	28	Tim Long	6-1	278	18

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

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DE	22	Leon Brockmeier	5-7	201	18
DE	23	Derek Martinez	5-8	202	18
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DE	30	Mike Souza	5-7	204	18
DE	31	Ben Kennedy	5-7	209	18
DE	32	David Farmer	6-5	245	18
DE	33	Elio Worley	6-5	252	18
DE	34	Zak Kuslok	6-2	280	18
DE	35	Matt Danielson	5-9	222	18
DE	36	Damian Anderson	5-11	232	18
DE	37	Kevin Lawrence	5-11	238	18
DE	38	Wheeler Cortright	5-11	238	18
DE	39	Glenn Latt	5-10	228	18
DE	40	Derrick Thompson	5-9	272	18
DE	41	Sam Simmons	5-10	217	18
DE	42	Tim Long	6-1	278	18

NORTHWESTERN OFFENSE

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RB	74	Derek Martinez	5-8	202	18
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THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

NEBRASKA VS. NORTHWESTERN



DEC. 30, 2000

HUSKERS BRING BIG GUNS TO TAME WILDCATS
IN SAN ANTONIO SHOOTOUT!

PICKS

Brian Hill
Editor

This isn't where Nebraska wanted to be or expected to be for the holidays, and it's difficult to predict what the Huskers' mindset will be entering the game. If they are focused and play up to their ability, it could be a rout. If not, who knows? **Nebraska 41, Northwestern 31**

Mike Babcock
Contributing Editor

Last year's Alamo Bowl game drew the highest viewing audience of any bowl game televised by ESPN. And this year's game figures to attract the same type of viewing audience because of the potential for offensive fireworks. Northwestern might have a better assortment, but Nebraska's will be more explosive. **Nebraska 49, Northwestern 31**

Bob Schaller
Contributing Writer

The Huskers continue to address the inconsistency on offense, but the defense comes of age against Northwestern. Though the Wildcats had to play the battering ram of a schedule that is the Big 10, it's simply a fact that the nation's best conference is the Big 12. And it is on this day, too. **Nebraska 30, Northwestern 20**

Terry Douglass
Grand Island (Neb.)
Independent Sports Editor

With two of the country's best offenses squaring off, many are expecting plenty of fireworks inside the Alamodome. But while Northwestern's offense is potent, Nebraska's much-maligned defense will be the difference, as the Huskers pull away. **Nebraska 44, Northwestern 24**

NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

NCAA title is fitting conclusion to storybook season

By Todd Henrichs

Greichaly Cepero didn't see it coming. Even as the rumors of Terry Pettit's impending resignation swirled all around her a year ago, Cepero was too busy to notice. The freshman from Puerto Rico was adjusting to school at Nebraska, playing volleyball at the highest level of her young life and preparing to add college basketball to her schedule this winter.

Then came the announcement, and for Cepero, the shock of wondering if she had lost the opportunity at a promising career.

"At one point, I felt like Coach Pettit betrayed me," Cepero said. "I came to Nebraska to be the best setter I could be, and I knew Coach Pettit could do that for me."

"But we had a meeting and he told me he was not going to leave me, and Coach Cook would work as hard as he did for the program."

With John Cook and Cepero as a team, Nebraska volleyball went to the top this season. Cook earned national coach of the year honors, and Cepero was named national player of the year in only her sophomore season, her first as Nebraska's setter.

The national championship was Nebraska's second in six years and marked only the second time a team finished its season undefeated in 20

The 34-0 Huskers

Name	Yr.	Pos.	Hometown
*Rachel Baumstark	Fr.	OH	Hermann, Mo.
Kim Behrends	Sr.	OH	Chappell, Neb.
Greichaly Cepero	So.	S	Dorado, Puerto Rico
Jenae Dowling	Fr.	DS	Fort Wayne, Ind.
Amber Holmquist	So.	MB	Houston, Texas
Pam Krejci	So.	MB	Crete, Neb.
Jenny Kropp	Jr.	MB	Grand Island, Neb.
Jill McWilliams	Sr.	DS/S	Des Moines, Iowa
*Nancy Meendering	Sr.	OH	Hull, Iowa
Angie Oxley	Sr.	RS	Ogallala, Neb.
Laura Pilakowski	So.	OH	Columbus, Neb.
Anna Schrad	Fr.	OH	Lincoln, Neb.
*Sara Westling	So.	MB	Lincoln, Neb.
Lindsay Wischmeier	So.	DS	Burchard, Neb.

Head Coach: John Cook (San Diego, 1979)

Assistant Coaches: Staci Wolfe (Colorado, 1995), Craig Skinner (Ball State, 1993)

*Redshirting this season



John Cook was named coach of the year by the American Volleyball Coaches Association.

Nebraska	15	9	7	15	15
Wisconsin	9	15	15	2	9

years of NCAA Volleyball championships. Nebraska finished 34-0.

"This team maximized every ounce of ability that they had to accomplish this," Nebraska Coach John Cook said. "If you would have told anybody at the beginning of the year that Nebraska would go undefeated and win the national championship, they'd say 'no way'."

Nebraska's 15-9, 9-15, 7-15, 15-2, 15-9 victory over Wisconsin in the championship match in Richmond, Va., was great theater.

Cook faced his former team and many of the players he left in 1998, saying Nebraska offered his best chance to win a national championship. That proved true in the end, but

Cook could only imagine the pain had the Badgers pulled off the championship.

"I probably have an ulcer because my stomach has just been in knots," Cook said. "I was dreading this match."

"It's a tough situation for me. How

bad do you think they wanted to beat Nebraska?"

Wisconsin played with the kind of drive and determination you would expect, even with 6-foot-3 starter Claudia Rodriguez injured and out of the lineup.

With a surge in games two and three, the Badgers were on the verge of a championship in their first appearance in the Final Four. Nebraska was breaking down fundamentally, as the pressure continued to mount.

"I was very concerned because when your passers are struggling, there's not much you can do about it," Cook said. "In the spring, we talked about how passing would determine how good this team would be."

So much had happened since spring. Cook had established Cepero as Nebraska's starting setter and decided that two-time All-American Nancy Meendering needed a break from competition and should redshirt this season.

Cook took the Huskers to China on an 18-day tour in May and June. It was designed as a bonding experience for the new coach and his new-look team. But it had the potential of disaster.

The conditions were unlike any



Sophomore Greichaly Cepero was named national player of the year.



Nebraska players celebrate after winning the Central Region title Dec. 9 at the NU Coliseum to advance to the Final Four.

the Huskers had ever experienced, "a survival course," as sophomore All-American Amber Holmquist called it. The Huskers bonded in a way not even Cook could have predicted.

On the last night of the trip, Cepero stood up and predicted the Huskers would win the national championship.

"You don't only need the physical talent," Cepero said. "One of the things more important is that people know how to work together and enjoy working together every day. On that China trip, I realized that we had something special."

Senior captains Angie Oxley, Kim

Behrends and Jill McWilliams made sure the bond held up throughout the year. Nebraska was the first team to go 20-0 in Big 12 play, wrapping up the regular season with a hard fought five-game win at Kansas State.

The Huskers played the match without Laura Pilakowski, the third of Nebraska's sophomore All-Americans. Pilakowski underwent an emergency appendectomy Nov. 21 but was back 11 days later when NU needed her offensive weaponry to outlast South Carolina in five games.

Pilakowski had 23 kills against Wisconsin, including the attack on championship point that sparked cel-

ebrations spanning from the court in Virginia to Nebraska and to Puerto Rico.

Shortly after the championship match, Cepero walked quietly with Pettit down a secluded hallway of the Richmond Coliseum. Each had an arm around the other, a silent show of respect.

Cepero and Cook now share that same admiration and the title of national champion. It turns out Cepero really can see into the future.

"It takes a special leader to make that statement and back it up," Cook said. "She's believed in it all along and her team's gone with her." ■

Reaching the Top

Tagge stretched ball over goal line to give Huskers first national championship

By Mike Babcock

With 8:50 remaining in the 1971 Orange Bowl game, Jerry Tagge stretched the ball across the goal line for the winning touchdown in Nebraska's 17-12 victory against LSU.

Tigers linebacker Louis Cascio clutched Tagge's jersey, trying to prevent the Nebraska quarterback from breaking the plane of the goal with the ball. Cascio's effort was in vain.

"Tagge made one of the smartest plays I've ever seen," LSU Coach Charlie McClendon is quoted by Loran Smith in *Fifty Years on the Fifty: The Orange Bowl Story*.

"He never got his body, not even his shoulders, to the goal line, but as he fell, he had the presence of mind to reach out and break the plane of the goal line with the ball.

"He just reached over and shoved the ball across like a loaf of bread."

Though much would happen before Bob Terrio's pass interception with 45 seconds remaining sealed the victory, Tagge's touchdown gave Nebraska its first national championship.

And in that context, a solid argument could be made for his heads-up play being the most dramatic in school history. The Cornhuskers have earned four national titles since New Year's night, 1971. But the first of anything is always special. The experience is unique. It can never be repeated.

Appropriately perhaps, though he grew up and went to high school in Green Bay, Wis., Tagge's roots were in Nebraska. He was born in Omaha, where he lived until age 4, when his



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Thirty years have passed since Nebraska won its first official national title. And during those 30 years, Nebraska has finished atop the national rankings four more times, including three from 1994 to 1997. As the 1970 season illustrates, championships can depend on luck as well as on preparation and design. In a 12-part series, Huskers Illustrated takes a game-by-game look at the 1970 season.

father, William, was transferred from the Strategic Air Command base in Bellevue to Green Bay.

William Tagge was a graduate of Wood River, Neb., High School, and his parents farmed near Shelton, Neb., before retiring to Grand Island. Those family ties influenced Jerry to accept the Cornhuskers' scholarship offer over those of Wisconsin and Michigan State.

That Tagge would make a smart play with the Orange Bowl game on the line was no surprise. He had done so before and he would do so again. "It was déjà vu for me," he said recently, recalling his "biggest thrill" as a Cornhusker. "I had dreamt what I would do in that situation.

"I took a step to the right, lunged and after they took their shot, reached the ball over. I always thought about last drives in my head. What would I do if I was behind?

"And so many times those situations occurred."

Tagge regularly scripted 10-play sequences, devising game plans

Jerry Tagge passed for 4,704 yards, No. 2 (behind Dave Humm) on NU's all-time list. His completion rate of 59.9 percent ranks No. 1.

Game 12 Nebraska 17, LSU 12

Jan. 1, 1971
Orange Bowl, Miami, Fla.

	Score	Time
(First Quarter)		
NU — Paul Rogers, 25-yd field goal	3-0	2:40
NU — Joe Orduna, 3-yd run (Rogers kick)	10-0	2:06
(Second Quarter)		
LSU — Mark Lumpkin, 36-yd field goal	10-3	:49
(Third Quarter)		
LSU — Lumpkin, 25-yd field goal	10-6	11:49
LSU — Al Coffee, 31-yd pass from Buddy Lee (kick failed)	10-12	:00
(Fourth Quarter)		
NU — Jerry Tagge, 1-yd run (Rogers kick)	17-12	8:50

[BEFORE LASIK]



[AFTER LASIK]

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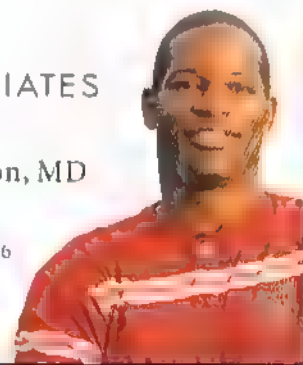
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based on what Tom Osborne, Coach Bob Devaney's offensive coordinator, emphasized during meetings and practice.

"Tom had certain plays in certain situations, and I knew what they would be," said Tagge. "I drew them on paper all the time. And that was very helpful to me, visualizing it."

Tagge called his own plays during games.

"I think I was very fortunate (in that)," he said. "It wasn't carte blanche to do whatever you want. But I'm in the huddle. I see who's hurt, who's gasping for air, whose eyes are lit up about making a block. I've got the game plan in my mind. I'm thinking about 10 plays in a row."

"Now it's not quarterbacking. It's reacting. Instead of your head being in the game, you're waiting for the play to come in. Quarterbacks today just don't have a feel for the position."

"I'm glad I played when I did. I don't think it's as much fun today."

Tagge's experience at Nebraska was nothing if not fun. "I just loved it, every minute," he said. "It was like a big chess game to me. When I wasn't comfortable was off the field."

The attention that goes with being the Cornhuskers' quarterback made

him uneasy. "I didn't know how to handle it," he said. "But on the field, I was a totally different person."

And he was an important piece of the puzzle that formed Nebraska's first two national championships, sharing the quarterback's job with an injury-plagued Van Brownson in 1970 and then handling the job by himself — he started every game — during the 1971 season.

When he finished his Cornhusker career, Tagge, now a financial planner with offices in Elkhorn, Neb., held school records for passing yardage and total offense. He's still second to David Humm in the former category and third in the latter, behind Tommie Frazier and Eric Crouch.

Tagge's strength was as a thrower. His 59.9 completion percentage remains a school career record for a minimum of 100 passes. And at 6-foot-2, 215 pounds, he could be an imposing ball carrier — near the goal line and in short-yardage situations. Otherwise, he wasn't a threat. "I was slow," he said.

As a freshman, the coaches considered trying him at several positions, including tight end, linebacker and center. But given his lack of speed, "the only position I could play was

quarterback," he said.

And at first, no one except Osborne thought he could play quarterback.

Tagge left Nebraska as a first-round draft choice of the Green Bay Packers in 1972. He spent three seasons with the Packers, played 11 games in the World Football League in 1975, until his San Antonio team went bankrupt, and then returned to Nebraska to finish a degree.

The day before graduation ceremonies, the British Columbia Lions of the Canadian Football League contacted him. "I negotiated a contract over the phone in 15 minutes," he said.

The British Columbia team wired him a \$5,000 signing bonus. He packed up his car, drove to Seattle and took a boat to Alaska, where he spent the week before reporting for training camp. He had seen a billboard in Seattle that encouraged people to visit Alaska. So he figured, why not?

He spent his entire signing bonus in Alaska, then headed to Vancouver, British Columbia, for training camp. "I was out of shape and figured I wouldn't even pass the physical," he said.

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He not only passed the physical, he became British Columbia's starter and was chosen as the Western Division's most valuable player after leading the Lions to the division final.

He played three seasons with the Lions before a knee injury ended his career. Two surgeries to repair the damage have left him "unable to do anything," he said. "I can't even walk a mile."

Tagge needed to get less than a yard in the Orange Bowl on New Year's night, 1971.

There were many crucial plays in the game, but none were more memorable than his touchdown, which has been frozen in time by a well-known Sports Illustrated photograph.

Tagge is leaning forward, reaching over a pile of bodies, with the football in his right hand near eye level, his index finger on the point, and his left hand below, palm upward.

His hands are cradling the start of Nebraska's national championship tradition.

Smith quotes McClendon: "It was one of the smartest plays I've ever seen in football."

No one would have been surprised that Tagge had made it. ■

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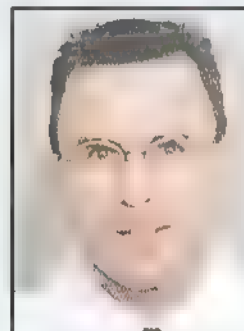
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Roy Christensen
M.S., CCC-A



Thomas Tegt
M.D.

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Hard Work Pays

New coach rewards walk-on Wortmann with playing time

If this were a story about a Nebraska football player, it wouldn't be all that unique. Walk-ons have long made significant contributions to the football program, and not just during practice.

Starters on this season's Alamo Bowl team include offensive tackle Jason Schwab, strongside linebacker Scott Shanle and punter Dan Hadenfeldt, all of whom walked on.

Basketball walk-ons, however, have labored in anonymity, contributing in practice but rarely playing in games. Ross Buckendahl, who is sidelined this season by a knee injury, saw limited action in 14 games last season — and even started against Minnesota because of an injury to Louis Truscott. Football player Matt Davison also walked on last season and started two games.

But Buckendahl and Davison were exceptions, albeit notable ones.

In that context, senior Craig Wortmann, a walk-on from Hartington, Neb., by way of Northeast Community College, started the first two games this season, evidence not only of his determination and perseverance but also of first-year Coach Barry Collier's willingness to reward hard work.

Collier was true to his word on that. He met with each of the players last spring, after replacing Danny Nee, and though "he didn't guarantee anything . . . he said he'd give me a shot in the fall, to keep working through the summer with the team and 'we'll see how it goes,'" said Wortmann.

"He wasn't guaranteeing any playing time or anything like that. But, you know, he was just saying, 'If you work



Craig Wortmann, a senior walk-on from Hartington, Neb., was in the starting lineup for this season's first two games.

hard, we'll probably keep you around,' something like that."

That was encouragement enough for Wortmann, who had played a combined 12 minutes in his first two seasons at Nebraska. (He played 32 minutes in this year's opener at Oral Roberts.)

To describe Wortmann's career prior to this season as undistinguished would be a gross misstatement. He more than doubled his career point total in the Oral Roberts game, scoring eight.

"Now it's kind of worth it, to stick it out," Wortmann said.

There was never any doubt about Wortmann's sticking it out, according to Cornhusker football player Russ Hochstein, his teammate at Hartington Cedar Catholic High School.

Wortmann, who was a year younger than Hochstein, played quarterback on the football team in addition to earning second-team Class C1 all-state honors in basketball as a senior.

"He was a great competitor. He loved to compete, and he loved basketball," said Hochstein, who also played basketball. "Growing up, I know he had a very strong confidence about

himself and handled himself very well on the court. He was never scared of a challenge; that's for sure."

Hochstein hasn't been surprised by Wortmann's success because "he has always come out and battled with the best of them," Hochstein said. "So it really doesn't surprise me at all."

As is the case with football players who walk on, Wortmann thought about playing at Nebraska while he was in high school. "I always kind of wanted to come down here," he said.

First, however, Northeast Community College in nearby Norfolk, Neb., offered him a basketball scholarship, "so I figured I'd take that and see how it went," he said.

He and Buckendahl, who's from Battle Creek, Neb., were teammates at Northeast. After earning all-conference honorable mention as a freshman, "I thought I kind of wanted something a little bit more," said Wortmann, who decided to transfer to Nebraska and try to earn a place on the team.

"It was kind of a risky deal," he said. "But I took the risk and it's paying off now."

After clearing his eligibility with the NCAA, Wortmann was among a half-dozen players who participated in try-

outs in the fall of 1998, just before the start of basketball practice

Former Cornhusker assistant Randy Roth conducted the tryout for then-Coach Danny Nee. The tryout was brief, and "basically like a workout," Wortmann said. "They just wanted to see if your fundamentals were there, see if you could use your size if you have it, things like that."

He and Buckendahl were the only ones asked to join the team. When Roth called to tell him, "I was pretty excited," said Wortmann. "But I didn't really know what to expect right away."

His job was to push the regular players during practice and help them improve. That had to be its own reward because he didn't get to see action until the 19th game of the season, a 72-55 victory against Colorado at the Sports Center. He played two minutes, grabbing one rebound.

Predictably, "I was really nervous when I got in there," he said. "I was a little scared."

Reserves who rarely play have to balance a desire to make the most of their opportunities by scoring with the need to show the coach that they're serious about what they're doing.

Typically, the fans, as well as their teammates, encourage them to shoot whenever they touch the ball on the offensive end. "You want to shoot, but you don't want to go out there and mess up all the time because then maybe the coach won't put you back in there," Wortmann said.

He took two shots in three games, hitting one, as a sophomore.

After two seasons, Wortmann was resigned to his place on the bench. But he never thought seriously about quitting. "It's probably just that I liked playing, you know? I like the game," he said.

He also liked being a part of the team. "I liked traveling with the team. The guys on the team, I got along with really good. You get kind of a bond with them," he said. "Even though you don't get to play, there are certain other things you can get from it. And you can help (teammates), too."

"The first year I was here, I just kind of learned as I went. I didn't expect much. I just practiced, tried hard, did what I could. But the second year, I got a lot better. I got more comfortable."

"I got used to things and used to people around here. I felt like I could do more that (second) year. It didn't affect my playing time much, but helping-the-team-out-wise, it did."

Wortmann accepts being a role-player. He contributes by hustling on defense, rebounding and providing leadership. "I don't have that much experience," he said. "But I figure I've been here a while; that's something I

FIN SHOTS

Notes And Quotes From The Basketball World

MORE TAPE

Eastern Illinois' Kyle Hill scored on an impressive dunk off an in-bounds pass in Nebraska's 85-71 victory against the Panthers at the Devaney Sports Center.

"The Hill kid is a great player," Cornhusker Coach Barry Collier said afterward. "We watched tape of him dunk on out-of-bounds plays. And now we have more tape of that."

Hill scored 35 points as Eastern Illinois took Nebraska into double-overtime before losing 81-78 at the Sports Center last season. He was "limited" to 20 points this time around.

CHANGES IN ATTITUDE

The Cornhuskers continue to make dramatic strides toward team unity under Collier. "I told our team before the (Eastern Illinois) game that had I just arrived for the last week to observe this team, I would have had no idea what anyone was talking about, about having a bad attitude," he said.

"They have demonstrated a great attitude, on and off the floor, and on the road. They've been, I think, more appreciative of everything. And that's just kind of a maturation process. But they're the ones that are responsible for it because they're exhibiting that behavior day after day now."

Senior guard Cookie Belcher has seen a change in attitude since last season, when he was forced to the sideline following wrist surgery. "I think there's a lot more unity on this team," he said after the Eastern Illinois game. "We all got excited on the court. I haven't seen that for a long time."

"We all seem like we enjoy being out there together. That's one thing I've noticed from last year, how much team love we've got, I guess you would call it. We seem to be coming together pretty good."

DUNKIN' DONUTS

At 6-foot-1, junior guard Cary Cochran rarely dunks, off alley-oop passes or otherwise. His offensive strengths include shooting 3 point shots and assisting the dunks of others.

Given the opportunity, "I would dunk it," he said. "But no one would throw it to me."

He and Belcher have an agreement, said Cochran. "When I reach 30 lob passes to him, he has to throw me one. I joke, if we get one a game, I should get one in the NCAA Tournament."

The Cornhuskers will play at least 30 games this season, counting the first round of the Big 12 Tournament at Kansas City, Mo., March 8-11. But even if he has to make good on their agreement, "Cary can't dunk a doughnut," Belcher said with a good-natured laugh. "He can't dunk."

MORE ON DUNKING

A well-timed dunk can give a team an emotional boost, according to senior center Kimani Ffrlend. "When you dunk the ball, especially when you dunk it on somebody, it gets the crowd going. And it also gets your teammates into the game, wanting to play harder on defense," he said.

Belcher enjoys dunking. "To dunk on somebody is one of the greatest feelings," he said. "It's hard to explain, but you just get out there and you look at the bench and you see your bench going crazy for a play that you did and it motivates you to play harder and maybe get another one." ■

can motivate at any time in the game, and I try to do that."

Whether or not he's playing, he sets an example, according to Hochstein. He was a leader in high school, Hochstein said, "and he's very intelligent. He won't get beat because of his intelligence. He'll get beat maybe because someone would be faster. But that would be the only way, I think."

"He'll dive after a loose ball if he has to. He's never had a problem doing that over the years that I played with him. Craig's a very hard-working kid. He's one of those guys who's always looking for ways to get better. He's a

guy who will hustle and give it all he's got."

Wortmann is one of five basketball walk-ons this season, not counting the injured Buckendahl. The others are junior Ryan Thomas and freshmen Ben Chesnut, Marcus Thornton and Adam Bohac.

"I was told when I got here that no walk-on, no non-scholarship player ever worked his way through and got to play," said Wortmann. "That was under Coach Nee. But I always thought, who knows what's going to happen? Somebody's got to be first, I guess." ■

Feels Like Home

A successful start for new wrestling coach Manning
By Steve Sipple

Nebraska wrestling fans are checking out a new head coach this season. A 38-year-old dynamo with a quick and easy smile. A Vermillion, S.D., native who was building a mountain of momentum at Northern Iowa before taking the Nebraska job last May.

Cornhusker fans will watch the new guy closely and compare him to the former coach, Tim Neumann. They'll watch Manning's wrestlers, looking for subtle differences in style and approach.

Manning, of course, can't control what fans think of him or his team. But he has an idea of what he WANTS them to think after they walk away from meets.

"I hope they go away saying they saw a hard-working team, a team out-working the opponent," Manning said. "I hope they go away feeling we have 10 fighters — that we're fighting to the end. Because wrestling is like a street fight with rules. When two great wrestlers go at it, it's like a war."

In terms of wins and losses, Manning made a positive first impression by guiding sixth-ranked Nebraska to three November dual victories. The Huskers began the Manning era Nov. 9 in Philadelphia with a 35-12 win against Drexel before defeating Rider 23-16 two days later in Lawrenceville, N.J.

Then, in its home opener, Nebraska



Nebraska wrestling Coach Mark Manning (left) inherited a talented team, including defending NCAA champion Brad Vering.

pounded Wyoming 31-7 as 197-pound senior Brad Vering recorded his 100th career victory.

"It feels like home here," Manning said a couple days after the Wyoming win.

Flash back a moment to May. He was happy at Northern Iowa, a 13,000-student university in Cedar Falls, Iowa. His superiors lavished praise on him. And why not? He produced three straight strong recruiting classes. And the Panthers had just finished 11th at the NCAA Championships, following a 10-5-2 dual season, their first winning record in seven years.

Manning wasn't looking for a job. But when Nebraska called, he had to listen. Because Nebraska, he said, possesses what virtually every coach wants — an unyielding commitment to athletics and a wealth of resources.

"When you think of Nebraska athletics, it means excellence," Manning said. "That's a big statement. Every sport here is trying to have national-championship potential, and that's hopefully what we'll have for the wrestling team."

"Tim Neumann brought the program to a high level, and I want to take it further. I make no bones about our ambition. It's to be national champions."

Manning was referring to the long run; Nebraska lacks enough depth to make an NCAA title run this season

But Manning by no means inherited an empty cupboard.

Neumann — who was forced to resign amid a university investigation into apparent NCAA rules violations regarding extra benefits — left behind a squad that finished eighth at the NCAA meet and returned three All-Americans, including a national champion in Vering.

The Huskers' other two returning All-Americans — 133-pound senior Todd Beckerman and 157-pound junior Bryan Snyder — also are regarded as national-title threats.

"I don't worry about any of those three being ready for nationals — they're ready right now," Manning said.

Vering, a native of Howells, Neb. (population 615), became the first native Nebraskan to capture an NCAA title with a dramatic 2-1 triumph against Iowa State's Zach Thompson last March in St. Louis. Vering finished 38-3 last season and is favored to repeat as the 197-pound champion.

During the offseason, however, Vering thought seriously about transferring. Disillusioned by the turmoil that led to Neumann's ouster, Vering asked Husker officials for a scholarship release. Big 12 Conference rival Iowa State and perennial power Iowa were his top two choices.

But Manning was against granting the release, and he received backing

from Nebraska Athletic Director Bill Byrne, who has final say on the matter. Vering considered a formal appeal, but the appeals process would have dragged on too long, he said.

Neumann recruited Vering, and the coach's problems caused Vering significant stress. What's more, Vering was angry when former Nebraska assistant Mark Cody was passed over for the Husker head-coaching position.

Now, however, Vering looks forward, not back.

"I try and stay positive and do what I can for this team," he said. "That means I practice like the meanest guy in the world every day. I've got to dominate to live up to my goals."

Beckerman and Snyder, meanwhile, give Nebraska two other wrestlers capable of dominating foes consistently.

In fact, Beckerman, of Crofton, Md., pinned each of his first three foes this season. Last season he became a first-time All-American with a fifth-place finish.

"Todd's really matured as a person," Manning said. "He's a man now."

Snyder, of Easton, Pa., finished fourth at the NCAA meet as a freshman and a disappointing fifth last season. He entered the 2000 NCAA Championships riding a 19-match winning streak but was beaten by Edinboro's Shaun Shapert 6-4 in the biggest upset of the first round.

Look for Snyder to avoid a similar letdown at this season's NCAA meet in Iowa City, Iowa.

"Our whole regular season will prepare us for the NCAA Tournament," Manning said. "Our guys will know that when they step on that mat in Iowa City, they need to be ready to go."

Given Nebraska's early top-10 ranking, such a finish at nationals would seem plausible.

"I sure hope we can," Manning said. "The deal is, every guy needs to get better."

Nebraska officials expect to receive NCAA sanctions, though they won't affect the team this season. Whenever the penalties are handed down, Manning said, he is prepared to work through them.

"The way I look at it, I'm going to be here for the rest of my life," Manning said. "This is going to be my last coaching stop. Anytime something like that happens, you have to look into the future."

"I know we'll get through that period. It'll be tough, but it's all about how you approach it." ■

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Players Don't Always Remain Committed

Offensive lineman from Illinois changes his mind about Huskers

By James Hale

Recruiting in the new millennium is a brand new ballgame. A commitment is not necessarily a commitment and with the pressure to get commitments early, a game of Russian Roulette seems to be played between

Nebraska Commitments for 2001					
Player	Hometown (school)	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.	
Clifford Brye	Hutchinson (Kan.) Comm. College	5-9	175	DB/WR	
Seppo Evwarayo	Laurel (Laurel-Concord), Neb.	6-5	323	OL/DL	
Antwon Guidry	San Jose (Leigh), Calif.	6-1	180	RB/DB	
Jared Helming	Springfield (Kickapoo), Mo.	6-4	270	DT	
Richie Incognito	Glendale (Mountain View), Ariz.	6-4	285	OL	
Mike McLaughlin	Omaha (Millard North), Neb.	6-1	175	QB	
Gary Pike	Pueblo (Centennial), Colo.	6-5	275	OL	
Cory Ross	Denver (Thomas Jefferson), Colo.	5-9	182	DB/WR	
Barrett Ruud	Lincoln (Southeast), Neb.	6-2	220	LB	
Mike Stuntz	Council Bluffs (St. Albert), Iowa	6-2	180	QB	

player and school on a daily basis.

Nebraska is one of the top recruiting schools in the nation. It has to be to stay ahead of the rest of the college

football world.

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football in the Midwest, which is not loaded with top prep prospects. There are good players in Nebraska and the surrounding areas but not a great number of them. Certainly when you compare the area to each coast and the state of Texas, there is no comparison.

Thus the Nebraska coaching staff strikes early in May and works off a tremendous summer camp where many of their top prospects are first seen. When the Huskers like a player, they will offer that player early and many times earn an oral commitment. In the mid-1980s, that commitment would definitely mean that the player was headed to Nebraska, but that's the always the case these days.

Nebraska has apparently lost out on offensive lineman Dan Stevenson (6-foot-5, 300 pounds and 5.2 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Barrington, Ill. Stevenson was one of the first athletes to commit to Nebraska, but since then, he has totally backed out of his commitment.

"After I thought about it for a while, I realized I had made a mistake," Stevenson said. "I didn't fit in with the players and the people. I really can't pinpoint what it is about Nebraska, but it is now not a fit at all. I just didn't feel comfortable there, and I don't think I fit in well there. The players are good guys, but I just don't feel I fit in among them."

Stevenson has since visited Wisconsin and Miami and Tennessee. He will also visit Florida.

The good news is that the Huskers have added some serious speed to their commitment list. Antwon Guidry (6-1, 180, 4.4) of San Jose (Leigh), Calif., is a tremendous athlete who could play safety or running back at Nebraska.

"Playing at Nebraska has always been a dream of mine," Guidry said. "They are the top program in college football, in my opinion, and I can't believe that I am going to play there."

Guidry led Leigh to the Central Coast Section championship game where it lost 28-20. He played primarily tailback and safety at Leigh, but in reality was so good he never left the field.

At tailback, Guidry rushed for 1,809 yards and 27 touchdowns, while adding another 260 yards receiving.

New OSU Coach Selling Program

New Oklahoma State Head Football Coach Les Miles has always been known as an aggressive recruiter.

While working as the offensive coordinator at OSU from 1995 to 1997, Miles was always one of the Cowboys' best recruiters. Already he and Mike Gundy, his assistant head coach, have been to see Seymour Shaw, the All-America running back from Shawnee, Okla. Shaw is committed to Oklahoma, but the Cowboy duo worked him hard trying to get him to visit.

"I believe that we have a great product at Oklahoma State, and we won't be afraid to sell our program to any player," Miles said. "The administration is committed to this program, is building new facilities and has given me everything that I need to build a winning program. We have a lot to sell here at OSU, and I plan on showing that to every prospect that I possibly can."

Miles has managed to get the Cowboys back into the hunt with Mark Roth (6-4, 226, 4.6) of Villa Park (Willowbrook), Ill., proving that Miles has extended contacts. Miles start his recruiting with three commitments in the bag.

— Oklahoma ran its commitment total to 14, when Tustin, Calif., tight end Chris Chester (6-5, 235, 4.6) gave the Sooners a positive response after visiting.

"I was leaning toward OU going into the visit, but the visit just blew me away," Chester said. "The OU players and coaches were great, and the people around campus were very friendly as well."

— Colorado State earned a commitment from Topeka (High), Kan., tight end Terrence Carter (6-4, 210, 4.7), who picked the Rams over Kansas.

— Kansas State hopes to sign Ricks (Idaho) Junior College quarterback Marc Dunn (6-5, 205, 4.6). Dunn threw for more than 3,000 yards last season and 34 touchdowns. Houston, Brigham Young and Arizona State are also very much in the loop, but Kansas State has his last visit.

— The Sooners also had Matt Leinart (6-5, 210, 4.6) of Santa Anna (Mater Dei), Calif., in for a visit. Leinart committed early to USC, but the Trojans fired Paul Hackett the coach when Leinart committed. Leinart liked his visit to OU enough that the Sooners are in the hunt for this top-10 quarterback. Leinart is waiting see who USC hires. If they don't hire a coach who throws the ball, then Leinart could be headed to Norman.

— Ryan Cubit of Columbia (Hickman), Mo., committed to Clemson. Cubit was considered the top quarterback in Missouri. Missouri may make up the loss by signing quarterback Travis Jackson of Olathe (South), Kan. Jackson has the Tigers on his list with Kansas State and TCU.

— Iowa State has earned an oral commitment from cornerback B.J. Johnson of DeSoto, Texas ■

However, many feel Guidry is best suited to play safety where he intercepted eight passes, returning three for scores. Guidry is also a great kick and punt returning five for touchdowns.

"Nebraska has told me that I could

play tailback, but that is really up to them," Guidry said. "Sure, I like to carry the ball, and I like to score touchdowns, but I feel I can do that also on defense. I definitely hope that I am involved in their return game."

His high school coach said Guidry

could fit in at several positions for a school like Nebraska.

"Antwon can do so many things on a football field that I hate to say where he will play," Leigh Head Coach Ken Padia said. "He has so much great speed that we just tried to put the ball in his hands any way possible."

"We played him primarily at running back, but we needed him at quarterback some and even a little at wide receiver. On defense, he was a difference maker as well. If they want to play him at safety, he could turn out to be a great one."

Guidry is still working to pass his ACT, but he is confident that he would at least qualify for partial-qualifier status, if he fails in his quest.

Guidry is one of the heartwarming stories of the recruiting season. Life has never been easy for him. He has never known his father, and he's lived with foster families over the last four years.

Guidry also had offers from Colorado, Fresno State and Idaho. Washington also wanted a visit.

Nebraska also has received a commitment from wide receiver/kick

returner Clifford Brye of Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College.

Brye, who played high school football at Lincoln (Neb.) Northeast, started as a true freshman at Wyoming and rushed for 451 yards (5.9 per carry). He transferred when there was a coaching change. Brye said he expects to play defensive back at Nebraska.

Running back Damien Nash (5-11, 195, 4.4) of East St. Louis, Ill., was one of the prime-timers who visited Nebraska on Dec. 9. Rated as one of the top 20 running backs in the country, Nash has Nebraska out in front of Tennessee, Florida State and LSU.

Twins Daniel (6-1, 195, 4.36) and Josh Bullock (6-1, 195, 4.4) of Hixson, Tenn., also made their official visit on December 12.

"There is no question that Nebraska is one of our top schools," said Daniel, who like Josh, is a safety prospect. "Nebraska has been one of our favorite schools since the beginning of recruiting. Nothing has changed."

"Tennessee is our second choice, and we are working to set up a visit with them. We know that will hap-

pen, but we are still trying to line up the date. We are also going to visit Auburn."

Georgia, Mississippi State and Florida State are also in the loop, but as of yet, they have not set up a visit, and Georgia won't until they hire a head coach.

Nebraska's fullback tradition has put it in a prime position to sign the best in the nation.

Ayo Saba (6-0, 255, 4.75) of Blackwood (Highlands), N.J., is the best lead blocker in the country and a better pure runner than everybody gives him credit for. Saba has already been to Wisconsin and Kansas State, and at the moment, the Wildcats are a slight leader.

"I had a great time on both of my visits, but I was leaning toward Kansas State going into my recruiting visits, and I would have to say that hasn't changed at this point," Saba said. "I don't like to get into every little thing about my visits, but let's just say that Kansas State was a little more me."

"Nebraska has always had a great fullback game, and I am looking forward to looking very closely at their offense this weekend."

Saba is also scheduled to visit Miami and Iowa.

Nebraska is very much in the running for another quarterback/athlete in Dawan Landry (6-3, 200, 4.5) of Boutte (Hahnville), La.

Landry has run some option, but even when he is not running option football, the run is very much a part of his game. This past season, Landry passed for 1,117 yards and rushed for another 602. He accounted for 26 touchdowns, 16 rushing.

"I like the Nebraska offense and feel it is a good fit for me," Landry said. "To be honest, the Nebraska offense is one of the very best in the country. What they do is hard to defense, and they have become more balanced in the last couple of years."

"I had a great visit with Coach (Frank) Solich at my house. I really like him, and I know he has had the same coaches for a number of years. I like the continuity in the Nebraska program."

Landry will visit Nebraska, and he plans to visit Colorado in early January. He also plans to visit Georgia Tech, Tulane and Southern Mississippi. ■

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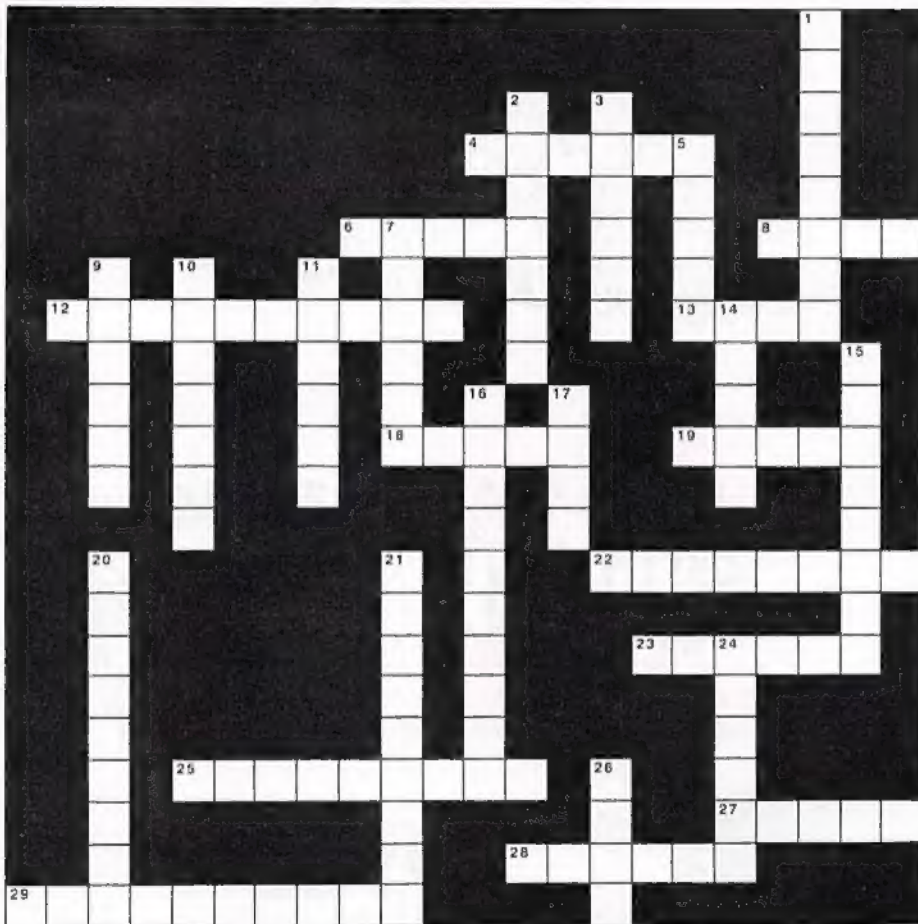
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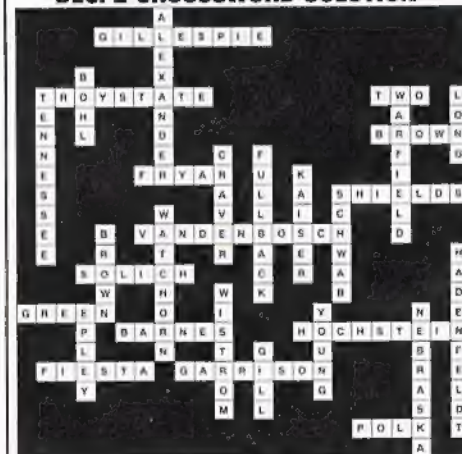
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NEB



He Just Keeps Going And Going

*Tenopir says All-America center Raiola
'the most enthusiastic, most high-energetic guy'*



**Mike
BABCOCK**

AS GOOD AS HE IS, Dominic Raiola can get better. And he will.

"You can always improve technique," Milt Tenopir said recently.

Nebraska's junior center also can improve his strength. "You can never get strong enough to play the game," said Tenopir, the Cornhuskers' veteran offensive line coach.

"To go to the next level, you've got to be awfully strong."

And Raiola will go to the next level, as sure as partisanship affects vote recounts. The important thing for Nebraska fans is that Raiola waits to go to the next level a year from now.

There has been talk of his leaving early for the National Football League. But Raiola has said he isn't leaving. And Tenopir is confident he won't. "College underclassmen, very few of them are ready to step in and be contributors in the NFL," said Tenopir. "So Dom understands that."

"Another year at Nebraska is going to be important for him."

Offensive linemen who leave college early for the NFL are rare, and those that do "are big, massive people, pass-pro type people that maybe don't have near the mobility Dom has but have the over-dominant size, like Orlando Pace, those kinds of guys," Tenopir said.

At 6-foot-2 and 300 pounds, Raiola is big enough. But he "understands that it's important that he improves in several areas of his game," said Tenopir. "His time will come."

By returning for his senior season, Raiola's time to win the Outland Trophy or the Lombardi Award (or both) could come. He was the only junior to be a finalist for both awards this season.

Tennessee's John Henderson won the Outland and Florida State's Jamal Reynolds won the Lombardi. Considering the fact that Henderson and Reynolds are defensive players, a reasonable argument could be made for Raiola's being major college football's premier offensive lineman.

"He's as good as there is in the country," Tenopir said.

Nebraska has had more Outland Trophy winners, by far, than any other school.

Seven Cornhuskers have won the award as the nation's best interior lineman, with Dave Rimington winning it twice (1981-82). The others were Larry Jacobsen (1971), Rich Glover (1972), Dean Steinkuhler (1983), Will Shields (1992), Zach Wiegert (1994) and Aaron Taylor (1997).

Rimington, like Raiola a center, also was among the Cornhuskers' four Lombardi Award winners (1982), along with Glover (1972), Steinkuhler (1983) and Grant Wistrom (1997).

Nebraska's list of All-Americans includes 11 who played center. And Tenopir has coached the last six: Rimington,

Mark Traynowicz, Bill Lewis, Jake Young, Aaron Graham and Taylor, who played center as a junior and guard as a senior. Rimington and Young were so honored twice.

Raiola "is the most mobile center I have ever seen," said Tenopir. "Dom is the best center we have ever had here in terms of his quickness, savvy, intensity, footwork and energy."

The last quality on that list, perhaps, characterizes Raiola better than any other.

"He's the most enthusiastic, most high-energetic guy . . . I mean, we've had a lot of kids that loved the game, but nobody has been more energized than what Dominic is," Tenopir said.

"When the game was on the line, he played the entire ball game, and we thought with very few signs of fatigue. He played with a great deal of intensity from snap one to snap 80."

"Dom came to play. He's a high-endurance guy."

Raiola also is an emotional player, in Tenopir's words an "arouse-able" guy. A year ago, his emotions led to what the coaches considered injudicious remarks prior to the Texas game.

"Dom gets himself ready for a game in his own way, and sometimes he gets a little over-exuberant," said Tenopir. "But he's matured an awful lot since he's been here, and he's going to continue to mature. Learning to block out the periphery is part of the game."

Raiola definitely knows how to block defenders. He has been credited with 285 "pancakes" or knockdown blocks the past two seasons, evidence of his extraordinary mobility. Nebraska is able to do some things offensively simply because he can get places that most linemen cannot.

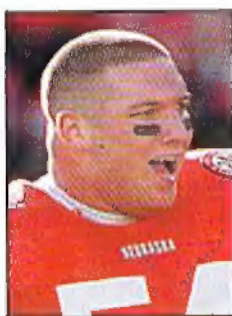
If voters for the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award had studied videotape of Raiola before casting their votes, the outcomes might have been different, according to Tenopir.

"If you really look and judge the kid on performance, you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone better than Dominic," he said. "You need to really evaluate a kid on the field instead of how much press he's gotten, how much ink he's gotten, who's pushing who, how many fliers get out on a guy."

Offensive linemen can be at a disadvantage because there are few statistics on which to evaluate them. "But I promise you, if you took a highlight tape of Dominic Raiola, and we put the highlight tape together, he would show up as much or more than a lot of defensive players," Tenopir said.

"He does some phenomenal things in the open, where you can really see him make a play."

Raiola, who was well on his way to earning consensus All-America recognition, will continue to do such things. He was particularly disappointed about not winning the Outland Trophy, according to Tenopir. "We all were. But that certainly isn't going to affect Dom's game," said Tenopir. ■



**Dominic Raiola was a
finalist for the Outland
and Lombardi.**